



2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Methodological Resource Book

Section 8: Data Collection Final Report

2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Methodological Resource Book, Section 8: Data Collection Final Report

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1. Introduction

The 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) was the 44th in a series of general population surveys intended to provide national and state-level data on substance use patterns and mental health issues in the United States.

NSDUH is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. SAMHSA contracted with RTI International to conduct activities including sampling, listing, screening, interviewing, data processing, and reporting.

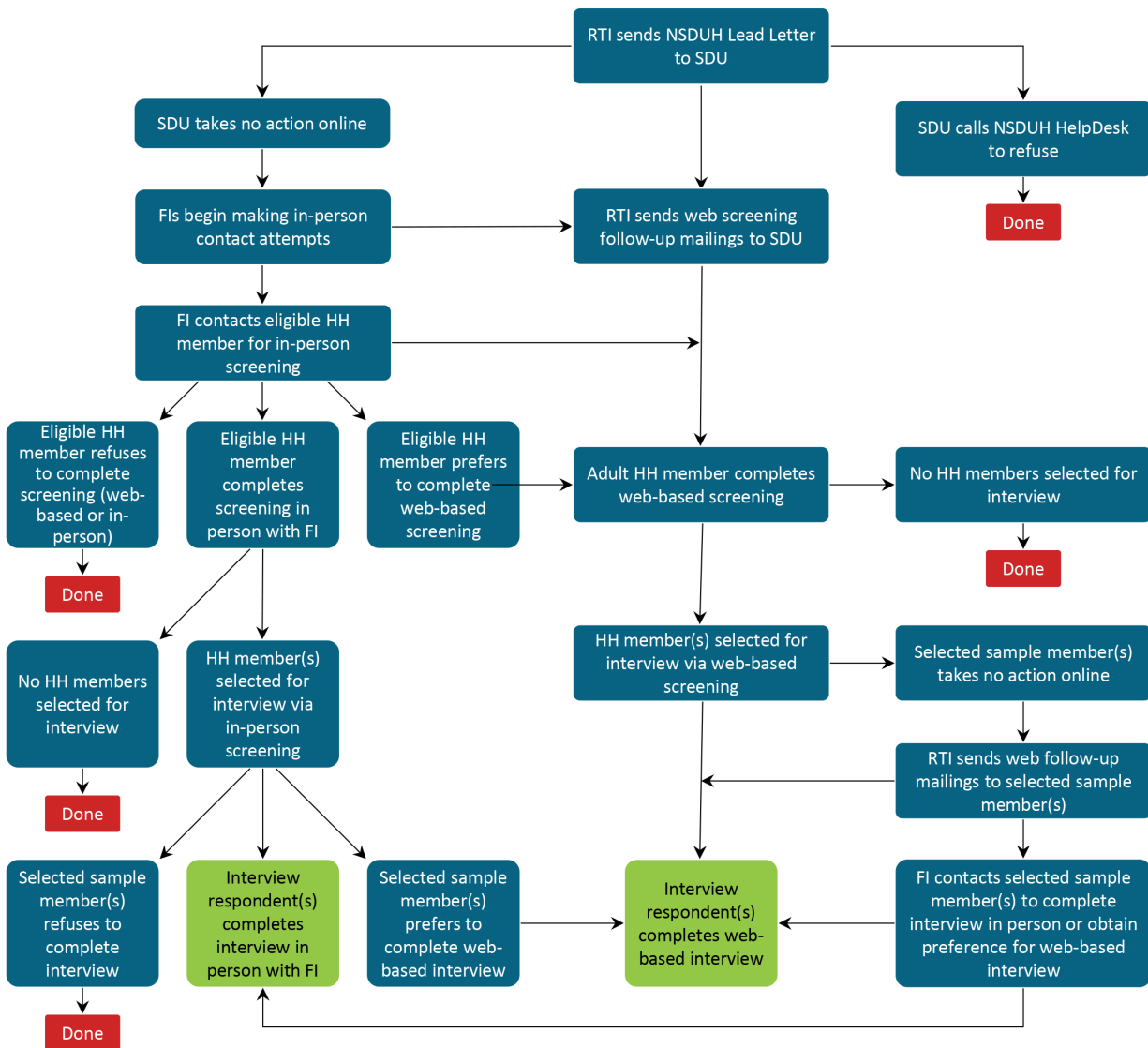
For the 2024 NSDUH, data were collected from respondents using either web-based or in-person modes. [Exhibit 1.1](#) presents a flowchart of the multimode data collection procedures. Data collection preparatory work for the 2024 NSDUH began in March 2023. [Exhibit 1.2](#) provides approximate time frames for the various tasks completed.

Web-based data collection began on January 5, 2024. Training sessions with all returning veteran field interviewers were conducted on a flow basis in early January 2024, and in-person data collection began on January 11, 2024.

All data collection ended on December 14, 2024. The total number of completed screenings for the 2024 NSDUH was 203,743. Of those, 113,502 screenings were conducted in person and 90,241 screenings were completed via the web. The total number of completed interviews for the 2024 NSDUH was 70,241. Of those, 42,265 interviews were conducted in person using computer-assisted interviewing and 27,976 interviews were completed via web-based interviewing.

The remainder of this report addresses the following data collection topics for the 2024 NSDUH: Sampling and Listing Operations, Data Collection Staffing, Preparation of Survey Materials, Field Staff Training, In-Person Data Collection, Web-Based Data Collection, Data Collection Results, and Quality Control.

Exhibit 1.1 Multimode Data Collection Procedures



FI = field interviewer; HH = household; SDU = sample dwelling unit.

Exhibit 1.2 Schedule of Major Data Collection Activities

Activity	Approximate Time Frame
Began data collection preparatory work for the 2024 NSDUH.	March 2023
Prepared in-person and web-based screening and interviewing programs.	February-December 2023
Prepared manuals and materials for field interviewer trainings.	March 2023-January 2024
Recruited listing staff.	March-June 2023
Conducted listing and created lists of sample dwelling units.	June-November 2023
Recruited field interviewers for Quarter 1, 2024 (replacement staff also hired throughout the year as needed).	October 2023-January 2024
Conducted veteran field interviewer training sessions.	January 2024
Conducted and managed in-person and web-based screening and interviewing operations.	January-December 2024
Conducted verification operations.	January-December 2024
Conducted new-to-project field interviewer training sessions.	January-September 2024

2. Sampling and Listing Operations

2.1 Overview of Sampling Procedures

A coordinated sample design was developed for the 2014-2017 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUHs) and was extended to the 2018-2024 NSDUHs. The sample design for the 2024 NSDUH, as a subsample of the multiyear study, consisted of a deeply stratified, multistage area probability design. For details on the sample design, see the *2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Methodological Resource Book, Section 2: Sample Design and Experience Report* (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2025). [Exhibit 2.1](#) presents a summary of the 2024 NSDUH sample.

The coordinated design uses a 50 percent overlap in sampled areas within each successive 2-year period from 2014 through 2024; that is, each year, half of the sampled areas are retained from the previous year. The other half of the sampled areas are new and are used again for the following year's survey.

The sample selection procedures began by geographically partitioning each state into state sampling regions (SSRs) that were roughly equal-sized in terms of allocated samples. These regions were formed as a means of stratification so that each area in a state would yield roughly the same number of interviews during each data collection period. This partitioning divided the United States into 750 SSRs made up of counties or groups and parts of counties.

The first stage of selection was census tracts. Within each SSR, a sample of 48 census tracts was selected with probabilities proportional to size and with minimum replacement. Before selecting the census tracts, some had to be aggregated to meet the minimum dwelling unit (DU) requirement,¹ which ensures that each sampled area can yield a sufficient sample.

For the second stage of selection, adjacent census block groups were aggregated within selected census tracts as necessary to meet the minimum DU requirement. Then one second-stage unit (consisting of one or more census block groups) was selected per sampled census tract with probability proportionate to size and with minimum replacement. The selection of census block groups facilitated the transition to a hybrid field enumeration and address-based sampling (ABS)² DU frame for the 2022 through 2024 NSDUHs.

For the 2024 NSDUH, the third stage of selection was eliminated to reduce intracluster correlation and increase precision. However, for the 2014 through 2022 NSDUHs, each sampled census block group was subdivided into smaller geographic areas of adjacent census blocks, and one third-stage sampling unit was selected with probability proportional to size for field enumeration.

¹ In California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia, the minimum DU requirement was 250 DUs in urban areas and 200 DUs in rural areas. In the remaining states and the District of Columbia, the minimum requirement was 150 DUs in urban areas and 100 DUs in rural areas.

² ABS refers to sampling of residential addresses from lists based on the U.S. Postal Service's files.

The 2024 NSDUH hybrid field enumeration and ABS approach involved evaluating sampled census block groups or “segments” using a set of ABS coverage criteria. If the census block group met all coverage criteria, the ABS frame was used for the census block group. If the census block group failed one or more coverage criteria, field enumeration was used to construct the DU frame.

One segment per selected census tract, or a total of 48 segments per SSR, were originally selected in the coordinated sample (with probabilities proportional to size): 20 to field the 2014-2017 studies and 28 to serve as backups in case of sample depletion, to field any supplemental studies that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) may have requested, or to extend the sample beyond 2017. These 28 segments per SSR are referred to as the “reserve” sample and were used to field the 2018-2024 NSDUHs. An equal probability subsample of eight segments from each SSR was used for the 2024 NSDUH. For the 2024 survey, a total of 6,000 segments within the 750 SSRs were selected. Of the total, 3,000 segments were overlap segments used during the 2023 survey, 2,986 were new, and 14 were duplicates of other segments used in the previous surveys (i.e., before 2024).³

Of the 2,986 new segments, 1,934 were ABS segments and 1,052 were field enumeration segments. Once new field enumeration segments were identified, the process of listing the DUs within each segment began. Beginning in June 2023, listers utilized an electronic listing (eListing) application on the NSDUH tablet to list DUs in field enumeration segments.

Once all DU frames for a particular quarter were constructed, the fourth-stage selection process involved using a random start point and interval-based (systematic) selection in each segment to identify sample dwelling units (SDUs) for inclusion in the study.

After SDUs were selected, a roster of all eligible individuals residing in the SDU was created either during an in-person screening with a field interviewer (FI) or during the web-based screening process. Using this roster information, the electronic or web screening program automatically implemented the fifth stage of selection. At the fifth stage, individuals were sampled at different rates based on state and age. The 2024 NSDUH was designed to oversample younger age groups by allocating the target national sample size to five age-group strata as follows: 25 percent for youths aged 12 to 17, 25 percent for young adults aged 18 to 25, 15 percent for adults aged 26 to 34, 20 percent for adults aged 35 to 49, and 15 percent for adults aged 50 or older.

2.2 Lister Recruiting and Training

The existing NSDUH data collection management structure was used to supervise the listing effort. All current field supervisors (FSs) handled the administrative tasks for listers hired in their areas. These tasks included completing the initial recruiting and hiring process, managing new lister mentoring and segment assignments, overseeing the timely completion of segments, and approving time and expense reports. For technical assistance, such as how to handle a

³ For duplicate segments, the same area had been listed previously under a different segment identification number, so the original listing was used instead of relisting the same area.

specific segment, listers contacted the eListing Hotline staffed by the eListing manager and assistant manager, as well as members of the RTI Sampling Department.

Beginning in March 2023, FSs recruited listing personnel from their existing staff of FIs. Experienced and new listers not currently working as FIs were also available for hire. All listers received a training shipment containing an eListing Manual and a memo with instructions on completing four eListing courses online. The courses provided detailed instruction on eListing topics and procedures.

Staff with previous eListing experience were required to thoroughly review the eListing Manual, successfully complete all four online courses, and pass a home study before receiving any segment assignments from their FS.

New listers without previous experience were required to read the eListing Manual and successfully complete the online courses prior to attending a training session conducted via videoconference. The training session consisted of instruction and interactive exercises on using the eListing application, listing procedures, methods for documenting segment information, transmitting listing data, and other topics. After successfully completing training, new listers participated in a mentoring session with an experienced lister before receiving segment assignments and beginning work.

A total of 151 listers worked from June through November 2023 to complete listings in field enumeration segments for the 2024 NSDUH.

2.3 Listing Procedures

Before the start of field work, RTI Sampling staff generated a Mobile Map Package (MMPK) for each segment. Each MMPK contained electronic maps of the selected area as well as electronic forms for documenting DU locations and recording addresses or other descriptive information. RTI Sampling staff and FSs had access to the electronic maps for reference throughout the listing process to assist listers or answer questions.

Listers who successfully completed all training requirements were marked as “Passed” through the web-based Case Management System (CMS), which then made them available for segment assignments by the FS. Assignments were made with consideration to the listers’ location in relation to the segment, experience listing under various circumstances, and lister availability. After FS assignment, listers picked up their assigned segments by transmitting from their NSDUH tablet.

Using the tablet and eListing application, listers recorded the address or description of all DUs in each assigned segment. Listers transmitted completed segments back to RTI, where the listings were carefully reviewed and edited as needed by members of the Sampling Department editing team. Sampling Department editors performed a detailed comparison of addresses and other information listed to locations assigned on the segment maps, checking for any errors (e.g., incorrect zip codes, odd and even street numbers recorded on the same side of the street),

inconsistencies (e.g., misspelled street names), duplicate addresses, and omissions. To improve the quality of the listing, suggestions for improvement were provided to listers when necessary.

To maximize efficiency and minimize the time required to list a segment, RTI Sampling staff used U.S. Census counts to complete subsegmenting of exceptionally large geographic areas or segments with high DU counts (typically 750+ DUs) before assigning the segment to a lister. Listers reported segments that, even after subsegmenting, contained exceptionally high miles or high DU counts to the Sampling Department. The Sampling Department's editing team used online resources to obtain a rough count of DUs in the selected area and performed additional subsegmenting, further reducing the geographic area and number of DUs to be listed.

Of the 1,052 new field enumeration segments for the 2024 survey, 532 required subsegmenting, with the majority completed before the segment was assigned to a lister.

Listed and edited DUs were exported into a computer control system where a selection algorithm was applied to all 2024 NSDUH segments and specific SDUs were selected to be contacted for the study. Before the beginning of the appropriate quarter, FSs assigned segments (or partial segments) to their interviewing staff. FIs received all assigned SDUs on their tablets, along with the electronic segment maps and forms completed during listing.

2.4 Addition of Missing Dwelling Units

During the screening process, FIs were trained to identify any unlisted DUs that existed within or on the property of the SDU.⁴ If the missed DUs were housing units, they were automatically entered in the tablet (up to established limits) and selected for participation. At most, the FI could independently add 5 missed DUs per SDU and a maximum of 10 missed DUs per segment. If the FI discovered more than these amounts or if the missed DUs were group quarters units, the FI called their FS. The FS then either called the Sampling Department for further instructions or told the FI to contact sampling staff directly, depending on the situation. For the 2024 NSDUH, 304 segments experienced added DUs, for a total of 829 added DUs.

2.5 Challenges Related to Sampling and Listing Operations

2.5.1 Controlled Access

Listers encountered access problems in many major urban areas and some suburban areas. Field management often collaborated with listers to identify access barriers and determine appropriate solutions based on the specific circumstances of each case. Protocols were in place to handle access problems at buildings and in communities, and such problems were typically resolved through consistent follow-up efforts of supervisory staff, including the use of situation-specific letters requested by the FSs and/or regional supervisors (RSs).

⁴ Web screening respondents were not asked about other DUs within or on the property of their DU(s).

2.5.1.1 Military Bases

Access to military bases was handled with a formal and standardized approach, as was done in previous years. Through joint RTI and SAMHSA efforts, a point of contact (POC) for each branch of the service was identified. When listers were denied access and attempts to gain access by field management were unsuccessful, RTI staff reached out to the appropriate branch POC for assistance. Through a review of prior years, RTI learned that gaining access to selected military bases was usually attainable without needing the assistance of the branch POC. The following steps were used to gain access to segments on military lands:

- Field management staff attempted to gain access by contacting the base.
- If requested, RTI provided controlled access letters or additional project information.
- If the efforts of field management staff were unsuccessful, the branch POC was contacted to request assistance in notifying base commanders regarding RTI's need to access selected bases.

These efforts were effective; access to most of the selected bases was secured.

2.5.1.2 Colleges and Universities

Access to colleges and universities can sometimes be problematic. When necessary, RTI used several standard approaches to accommodate the concerns of school administrators. Having standardized letters available that addressed recurring issues with a variety of attachment options was very effective.

Most schools requested or required only a letter stating the sponsor and purpose of the study and identifying the lister or data collection staff. However, some schools wanted more information and the right to approve the data collection procedures and personnel working in and around their campuses. Most of these situations resulted in packages being sent that contained descriptive information about the study and procedures, various materials used with respondents, and RTI Institutional Review Board approval information. In the end, most educational institutions expressing concerns cooperated in the listing phase of the 2024 NSDUH.

2.5.2 Segments with Reassigned Quarters

Twenty-two segments were identified during listing as difficult to access during months with unusual weather. Most access problems were due to roads being impassable because of snow during the winter months or roads being inaccessible because of rain. If segments with weather or geographic access problems were selected for a quarter in which the access would be a problem (generally Quarter 1 or Quarter 4), the segment was switched with a segment in the same region for an appropriately paired time period. For example, inaccessible Quarter 1 segments were typically switched with Quarter 2 segments in the same region that would be more accessible during Quarter 1; Quarter 4 segments were typically switched with more easily accessed Quarter 3 segments. Generally, the "switched" segment was selected because it was more urban or had more accessible roads.

In a few locations, such as some areas in Alaska, there were no segments that were better for reassignment during the problematic time period. When this occurred, staff made prompt assignments, emphasized early completion of the work, and tried to plan around good weather forecasts to accomplish the field work as early in the period as possible.

2.5.3 Edited Addresses

FIs followed the detailed Editing Address Protocol that emphasized the importance of exercising care when editing addresses, which in turn could alter the sample frame, particularly if the edit created a duplicate address. FIs encountering a potential address change referred to a chart that listed various editing address scenarios, along with instructions to follow in each scenario.

Project management closely monitored reports on the web-based CMS for any potential problems resulting from address changes. A Duplicate Address report, updated daily, captured edited addresses made by FIs that produced duplicate listings. A separate Edited Address report, also updated daily, listed changes made to addresses other than those appearing on the Duplicate Address report.

As a result of the continued monitoring of edited addresses, the incidence of problems potentially affecting the sampling frame was minimal. Any such problems were reported to sampling staff, who reviewed and provided a solution that would maintain the integrity of the NSDUH sample.

2.5.4 Sample Size

Consistent with the 2021 through 2023 NSDUHs, the 2024 NSDUH data were collected through multimode data collection.⁵ Web data collection resulted in a much lower overall response rate than in-person data collection, as expected; therefore, each quarter, a very large sample of DUs was selected and released. [Exhibit 2.1](#) provides a summary of the 2024 NSDUH sample.

⁵ As of the publication of this report, SAMHSA plans to continue the use of multimode data collection for future NSDUHs.

Exhibit 2.1 2024 NSDUH Sampling Summary

Statistic	California	Florida, New York, and Texas	Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania	Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Virginia	Hawaii	Remaining 37 States and the District of Columbia	Total
Total Sample							
SSRs	36	90	96	60	12	456	750
Segments	288	720	768	480	96	3,648	6,000
Selected DUs	60,943	145,940	152,670	85,413	14,863	549,293	1,009,122
Eligible DUs	58,762	133,856	142,116	80,258	13,293	499,387	927,672
Completed Screening Interviews	11,515	24,532	29,278	17,510	2,751	118,157	203,743
Selected Respondents	9,319	17,696	19,474	11,906	2,006	76,769	137,170
Completed Interviews	4,517	9,322	9,689	6,295	1,010	39,408	70,241
Average per State							
SSRs	36	30	24	15	12	12	N/A
Segments	288.00	240.00	192.00	120.00	96.00	96.00	N/A
Selected DUs	60,943	48,647	38,168	21,353	14,863	14,455	N/A
Completed Interviews	4,517	3,107	2,422	1,574	1,010	1,037	N/A
Interviews per Segment	15.68	12.95	12.62	13.11	10.52	10.80	N/A
Average per SSR and Segment, by Quarter							
Segments per SSR	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	N/A
Interviews per SSR	31.37	25.89	25.23	26.23	21.04	21.61	N/A
Interviews per Segment	15.68	12.95	12.62	13.11	10.52	10.80	N/A
Total States	1	3	4	4	1	38	51

DU = dwelling unit; N/A = not applicable; SSR = state sampling region.

3. Data Collection Staffing

The magnitude of the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) required a data collection management structure robust enough to support the interviewing staff and flexible enough to manage an ever-changing variety of issues. The overall management structure remained unchanged from prior surveys: field supervisors (FSs) managed states and substate regions and reported to regional supervisors (RSs), who then reported to regional directors (RDs), who reported directly to the Director of Data Collection.

Careful consideration was required to determine the most effective and cost-efficient distribution of work within each level of management.

3.1 Regional Directors

Two RDs, reporting directly to the Director of Data Collection, managed data collection within specified national territories. The RDs in place at the end of 2023 continued their roles through the end of 2024.

RDs were survey managers with many years of experience at RTI International and on NSDUH. Each RD managed a staff of RSs, who in turn managed a staff of FSs who managed the team of field interviewers (FIs) in their individual states or assigned areas.

RDs also had project-wide ancillary functions not specific to their region. These included coordinating controlled access communications, FS recruiting, and traveling field interviewer (TFI) management.

3.2 Regional Supervisors

The RSs were the direct managers of FSs. Reporting to an RD, RSs were responsible for all data collection activities in the states in their region. The states, as well as the District of Columbia, were clustered geographically to be managed by the RSs. At the end of 2024 data collection, there were five RSs.

3.3 Field Supervisors

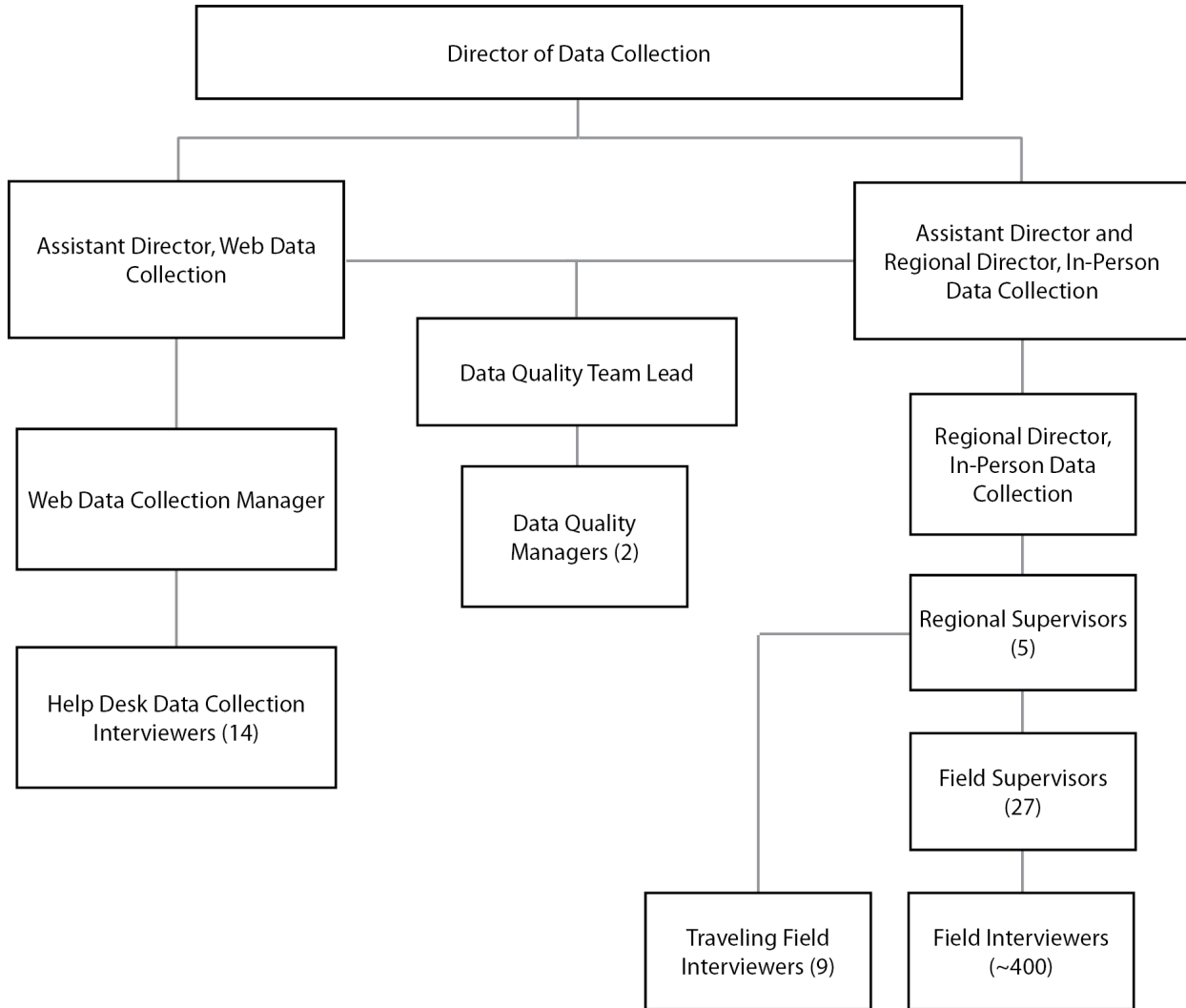
The FSs were the first-level supervisors of FIs conducting data collection in each of the states. The FSs assigned work, monitored progress, resolved problems, and managed the day-to-day activities of their FIs. Each FS reported directly to an RS. At the end of 2024 data collection, there were 27 FSs.

[Exhibit 3.1](#) shows the management configuration for Quarter 4, 2024.

3.4 Field Interviewers and Traveling Field Interviewers

One of the primary FS functions was the continuous recruiting and hiring of FIs needed to complete data collection each quarter. The Data Collection Staff business segment of RTI was the employer of record for all FIs hired for the 2024 NSDUH.

Exhibit 3.1 Management Chart



Once hired, FIs went through a background investigation, to include submitting fingerprints, by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

FIs were also required to read and sign a Data Collection Agreement, committing to the standards of confidentiality, in the presence of a notary public. Failure to comply with the provisions of this agreement would have resulted in termination from NSDUH.

FSs attempted to hire bilingual interviewers who spoke Spanish fluently in those sample areas with large Spanish-speaking populations. Each bilingual candidate was screened to assess the applicant's Spanish-language abilities. Certification involved reading and speaking in Spanish. The bilingual candidate had to meet these requirements satisfactorily before being hired and trained as an RTI-certified bilingual interviewer.

TFIs, another subset of specialized interviewers, were assigned to a TFI manager and gave each RD region access to the TFIs. TFI team members were used to fill unmet needs in areas with staffing shortfalls or where special needs arose (such as covering long-term illnesses among the staff). In 2024, nine TFIs worked on the study, including two bilingual interviewers who were assigned to areas where no bilingual interviewer was available.

During 2024, a total of 403 FIs worked on the study. Of the 403 FIs, 70 (17.3 percent) were bilingual in Spanish.

3.5 Web-Based Data Collection Support Staff

The assistant director for web data collection oversaw all aspects of web-based data collection. The web operations manager handled day-to-day operations, which included working with RTI's Call Center Services unit to maintain a team of NSDUH Help Desk data collection interviewers (DCIs). In 2024, approximately 14 DCIs provided basic technical support, completed the parental consent and youth assent process, and answered general questions about NSDUH. The DCIs used a web-based ticketing system on RTI's secure network to record basic information about each call. Project staff, including 10 quality experts reviewed tickets for accuracy and completeness to ensure that the callers' questions or concerns were being adequately addressed.

3.6 Challenges Related to Data Collection Staffing

3.6.1 FI Turnover

In 2024, the overall turnover rate among FIs was 35.63 percent, a decrease from 37.23 percent in 2023. This turnover rate reflects all resignations and terminations, including new FIs who completed new-to-project (NTP) FI training and resigned before completing any fieldwork.

To combat FI turnover, RTI took a variety of steps, including the following:

- implementing a two-person panel interview structure to facilitate hiring a higher level of qualified candidates;
- recruiting and carefully selecting qualified staff who understood the demands of the job before being hired;
- training staff thoroughly and mentoring all new FIs;
- supporting staff with individual calls each day during data collection, FS team meetings at least once each quarter, and a series of five regional group meetings with new FIs to reinforce project protocols, build skills, and address challenges common to new FIs; and
- providing assurance of never being alone: there is always someone to call for assistance.

4. Preparation of Survey Materials

RTI International and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) staff reexamined and updated the in-person and web-based interview programs, the in-person and web-based screening programs, and all other manuals and interview materials in preparation for the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH).

The *2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Methodological Resource Book, Section 3: Instrumentation Protocol Changes* (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2024) provides a summary of changes to the survey instruments and materials for 2024.

4.1 Screening Program Development

4.1.1 In-Person Screening Program

Referencing the 2023 screening program, updates were made to prepare the 2024 in-person screening program. Specifications for the in-person screening program are provided in the *2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH): Final In-Person Screening Specifications for Programming* (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2023a).

4.1.2 Web-Based Screening Program

Referencing the 2023 web-based screening program and the changes to the in-person screening program for 2024, the web-based screening program was updated for 2024. Specifications for the web-based screening program are provided in the *2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH): Final Web Screening Specifications for Programming* (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2023c). For more details on the web-based screening program and process, see Chapter 7.

4.1.3 Spanish Translations

Changes to the English in-person screening program and materials were translated into Spanish and incorporated into the 2024 Spanish in-person screening program. The web-based screening program was also translated into Spanish.

4.2 Interview Program Development

4.2.1 In-Person Computer-Assisted Interviewing Program

Referencing the 2023 in-person computer-assisted interviewing (CAI) program, changes were made to prepare the 2024 in-person CAI program. Specifications for the in-person CAI program are provided in the *2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH): Final In-Person Specifications for Programming (English Version)* (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2023b).

Text-to-speech (TTS) software was used to produce audio for the audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) portion of the in-person interview. TTS uses a computer-generated voice to read on-screen text. Materials used during the interview, including the Showcard Booklet, were also updated.

4.2.2 Web-Based Interview Program

Referencing the 2023 web-based interview program and the changes to the in-person interview program for 2024, the web-based interview program was updated for 2024. Specifications for the web-based interview program are provided in the *2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH): Final Web Specifications for Programming (English Version)* (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2023d).

The web-based interview did not include ACASI. Consultation with subject matter experts concluded that offering audio would result in a greater risk of confidentiality breaches because field interviewers (FIs) would not be present to offer headphones to interview respondents (IRs) and ensure privacy. Before some particularly sensitive modules of the web-based interview began, a prompt played on the screen to remind IRs to remain in a private location while completing the questions. For more details on the web-based interview program and process, see Chapter 7.

4.2.3 Spanish Translations

Changes to the English in-person CAI program and interview materials were translated into Spanish and incorporated into the 2024 Spanish in-person CAI program. For the in-person program, TTS software was used to produce Spanish audio to allow IRs to listen to the ACASI sections in Spanish, if they chose to do so. The web-based interview program was also translated into Spanish.

4.3 Data Collection Materials Development

For details on modifications to in-person data collection materials, see the 2024 Instrumentation Protocol Changes (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2024).

4.3.1 Web-Based Data Collection Materials

No modifications were made to web-based data collection materials for 2024.

4.4 IRB and OMB Submissions

The 2024 NSDUH and Mental Illness Calibration Study (MICS, referred to as the Follow-up Study) Institutional Review Board (IRB) package was submitted to the RTI IRB for full committee review on July 5, 2023. IRB approval of the 2024 NSDUH was received on August 14, 2023.

OMB clearance for the 2024 NSDUH was covered under the OMB Clearance Package for the 2022 NSDUH, which was approved on October 7, 2021. With an expiration date of October 31,

2024, the 2022 NSDUH provided clearance to collect data for three survey years: 2022, 2023, and 2024. Modifications to the NSDUH instruments and materials for 2024 and the inclusion of MICS were submitted to OMB on October 4, 2023, via a nonsubstantive justification memo. Final OMB approval of the 2024 NSDUH and the 2024 MICS, was received on December 1, 2023.

Before 2024 data collection commenced, two IRB modification packages for the 2024 NSDUH and MICS were submitted and subsequently approved. These modifications included updates to the response options for the sex and gender questions in the screening program, updates to several treatment questions in the interview program, and updates to main study and MICS respondent materials. Following the start of 2024 data collection, two additional IRB modification packages were submitted and subsequently approved. These modifications included further updates to several treatment questions and MICS respondent recruitment screens in the interview program, further updates to MICS respondent materials, and the addition of Computer Assistant Telephone Interviewing prompting for a subset of MICS respondents.

4.5 Website Development

RTI staff continued to refine and enhance the various NSDUH websites.

4.5.1 Case Management System

The web-based Case Management System (CMS) enhanced the ability of all levels of management to make informed decisions based on current field conditions. Each night, data were transmitted to RTI from the FIs' tablets and laptops for inclusion in the CMS. The next morning, each supervisor and manager had access to the results of the previous day's work and its effect on the totals for that quarter.

The CMS also contained many helpful tools such as the FI, Field Supervisor (FS), and Regional Supervisor (RS) Manuals; logs to enter new recruits and training information; links to other pertinent sites; project calendars; and other administrative tools.

Access to this secure website was tightly controlled with system-wide security provided through secure links to the network from each user's computer. A Security Key device was used to support NSDUH's Federal Information Processing Standards moderate requirements for two-factor authentication on in-field data collection laptops. The Security Key acts as a USB security token that implements a secure challenge-response protocol. The Security Key, in conjunction with secure passwords, provides tight two-factor security for NSDUH laptops.

4.5.2 Web Survey Website

To support web-based data collection, a NSDUH survey website was maintained with a focus on respondent confidentiality and ease of use. Testing was done to ensure the following:

- the survey website’s HTTPS encryption provided sufficient protection for all information entered from any device via any Internet connection (e.g., public Wi-Fi, cellular network, at-home Wi-Fi);
- the survey website navigation was user-friendly for screening respondents (SRs) to self-administer the screening questions; and
- the survey website would remain stable in periods of high traffic during the data collection period.

Using the website address provided in the lead letter, an adult resident of the sample dwelling unit (SDU) visited the initial log-in page on the NSDUH survey website. The resident, acting as the SR, selected a language (English or Spanish), then entered a participant code found on the lead letter—which was unique to that SDU. The SR then self-administered the web-based screening questions.

A “Contact NSDUH” link was displayed throughout the web survey, which provided a telephone number for the NSDUH HelpDesk that SRs could call to receive technical support and answers to any questions about participation in NSDUH.

As an additional layer of security, each selected IR was required to choose a unique 4-digit personal identification number (PIN) code to prevent anyone within the SDU from accessing the interview and seeing the IR’s answers to questions. After 15 minutes of inactivity, the IR was logged out of the survey website. If the IR logged back in with the SDU’s participant code and the IR’s unique 4-digit PIN within 4 weeks (or before the end of the data collection quarter, whichever comes first), the IR could resume from the last unanswered question. No one at RTI had access to these PIN codes. After 4 weeks of inactivity, interview data were removed from the web program and the IR was required to restart the interview from the beginning.

4.5.3 Data Collection Interviewer Website

A secure website was maintained for data collection interviewers (DCIs) to use to efficiently address inquiries from callers. The DCI website enabled DCIs to complete the following tasks:

- Follow a scripted process to obtain parental permission and youth assent for selected youth IRs to complete the web-based interview;
- Look up an IR’s incentive status for web-based interviews; and
- Access case status information to assist SRs and IRs with questions regarding interview selections.

For more details on the web-based parental permission and youth assent process and web-based incentive processing, see Chapter 7.

4.5.4 Respondent Website

An informative public NSDUH website was maintained and included a variety of topics such as project description, confidentiality, and frequently asked questions. Brief information was included about SAMHSA and RTI, with links to the websites of both organizations. The public could access a list of various users of NSDUH data with links to those users’ websites and news

articles about NSDUH. Respondents could also find contact information for the NSDUH HelpDesk via the website.

4.5.5 FI Website

The NSDUH FI website provided another channel of communication between management staff and FIs for exchange of project information and team updates. FIs referred to the website for pertinent information such as Upcoming Dates, Documents, News and Announcements, Quick Links, Videos, and Suggestions.

4.6 Maintaining Equipment

RTI staff used an extensive inventory system to monitor the disbursement and location of all NSDUH equipment, including FI tablets and laptops; management laptops and printers; and the many miscellaneous parts and cords. Technical assistance to the users of the equipment was an important and necessary task.

All field and management staff receiving NSDUH equipment acknowledged that they would not alter or add software unless directed by RTI staff to do so. Staff also indicated understanding the full and legal responsibility for taking reasonable and appropriate steps to safeguard equipment from damage, loss, or theft. All staff received training and had manuals available explaining proper care and handling of the equipment and the consequences of repeated equipment problems.

If staff left the project, equipment was returned to Technical Support for check-in and maintenance. Detailed procedures were in place to recover any equipment not readily returned by former staff.

4.7 Challenges Related to Preparation of Survey Materials

Development of all NSDUH materials and the screening and interviewing programs required a detailed and comprehensive schedule to ensure all preparations were completed on time.

5. Field Staff Training

Training for all levels of project field staff occurred both prior to the start of data collection and throughout the year. Training programs for experienced staff focused on updates to project materials and procedures and on improving necessary skills. Training for newly hired staff covered the detailed steps necessary to properly conduct fieldwork. All trainings were conducted via videoconference.

Training tasks for the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) included developing and implementing new-to-project (NTP) field interviewer (FI) training sessions (Section 5.2), veteran FI trainings (Section 5.3), and management training programs (Section 5.5).

5.1 Manuals and Training Materials Development

5.1.1 Manuals

Based upon the 2023 manuals, updated versions of the manuals listed below were prepared. These manuals covered procedures for in-person data collection and provided all staff, both experienced and new, with accurate, detailed training and reference materials:

- **Field Interviewer Manual:** New FIs received a hardcopy FI Manual prior to attending a NTP training, which detailed all aspects of an interviewer's work requirements on the 2024 NSDUH. It was used throughout the training sessions and served as a ready reference when questions arose throughout the year. Veteran FIs did not receive a hardcopy manual but were able to access an electronic version on their project equipment and provided a reference sheet listing important changes made to the manual for 2024.
- **Field Interviewer Computer Manual:** This companion manual to the FI Manual provided details about the use and care of both the tablet and the laptop. The computer manual included instructions for using the programs on each computer, transmission steps, and a problem resolution guide to assist staff encountering technical difficulties.
- **Field Supervisor Manual:** This detailed manual for field supervisors (FSs) included instructions and tips for recruiting field staff and managing the listing effort and screening and interviewing work. The manual explained the administrative procedures FSs are required to follow and provided information on using the Case Management System (CMS) to manage staff.
- **Field Supervisor Computer Manual:** Explanations of the computer equipment provided for FSs were included in this separate volume along with instructions on using the various software tools.
- **Regional Supervisor Manual:** This manual provided specific guidelines for RSs on supervising the FSs in their region and requirements for reporting to the regional directors (RDs). Separate chapters provided instructions for managing the various stages of NSDUH, including FI recruitment, listing, and screening and interviewing.

- **eListing Manual:** This manual included instructions on the use of the electronic listing (eListing) application on the tablet, along with detailed explanations and examples of listing procedures. All listers received a hardcopy manual in their pretraining package and could also access the manual on the tablet.
- **Data Quality Manager and Consistency Check Manuals:** These manuals, available to the Data Quality Team, documented the procedures to follow in the verification process and in resolving consistency check problems.
- **Guide to Controlled Access Situations:** This manual, available to all supervisory and management staff on the CMS, documented various approaches to try to gain admittance in challenging access situations.
- **Follow-up Study Field Interviewer Handbook:** This separate handbook contained details for FI recruitment of interview respondents (IRs) who were selected for the Mental Illness Calibration Study (MICS) conducted during 2024. For all materials and training, the MICS was referred to as the “Follow-up Study” to align with the language used in the NSDUH interview and to avoid any potential respondent concerns about the term “mental illness.” FIs received a printed handbook for reference during training and fieldwork. All other staff could reference the handbook on the CMS.

5.1.2 Trainer Materials

To provide consistency between training classrooms, staff developed near-verbatim guides for both veteran and NTP FI trainings. These guides provided detailed instructions and text to ensure all necessary instructional points were covered. In addition to the guide and accompanying visual slide presentations, trainers and FIs also used a workbook containing exercises and printed examples and other handouts and reference materials. The guide content and additional materials are described in later sections in this chapter.

5.1.3 Training Videos

Videos used during NTP FI trainings provided controlled, standardized, and visual presentations of the various tasks assigned to FIs. These videos contained multiple segments for use throughout training, covering topics such as screening and interviewing activities and tips from NSDUH FIs for gaining cooperation.

The veteran FI training program included several videos to illustrate the proper update process for the tablet and laptop, review the changes to the screening and interview programs for 2024, and demonstrate FI tasks using the electronic maps available on the tablet.

5.1.4 Online Courses

The NSDUH training programs made ample use of online courses. These courses allowed FIs to complete training topics at an individual pace and later review the course as needed. Each course consisted of visual slides with text and graphics, an audio component providing important information and instructions, video presentations, and a question-and-answer portion ensuring the FI’s comprehension of the material presented. Upon completion of the course, the results were shared with supervisory and training staff.

The courses required for all 2024 FI training sessions included the following:

- CIPSEA (Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act) Training
- Cybersecurity Awareness Training
- Records Management Training

Courses used in veteran and NTP FI trainings are described in later sections.

5.2 New-to-Project Field Interviewer Training Sessions

Sessions were scheduled throughout the year to train NTP FIs. The NTP training sessions consisted of various components, which included the following:

- home study and preliminary tasks (Section 5.2.3)—FIs who successfully completed the home study were assigned six initial online courses to learn the basics of the FI job and set up their NSDUH tablet and laptop;
- FI Basics courses (Section 5.2.3)—FIs completed 14 RTI standardized courses presenting general information about being an FI;
- initial online courses (Section 5.2.4)—FIs who completed the initial online courses as scheduled attended 5 days of instructor-led sessions via videoconference to review and practice all NSDUH FI tasks;
- instructor-led interactive sessions and daily required online courses (Section 5.2.4)—FIs were instructed to complete additional assigned courses prior to the next day's group sessions. To graduate, FIs had to complete all courses prior to certifications;
- certification (Section 5.2.5)—toward the end of training, FIs were required to pass an individual certification to graduate training;
- bilingual training and certification in Spanish, for bilingual FIs (Section 5.2.6)—after passing their certification, bilingual FIs attended an additional training and completed an individual certification in Spanish;
- mentoring (Section 5.2.7); and
- separate training for the Follow-up Study (MICS) (Section 5.2.8).

Five NTP training sessions were held in 2024, with 153 FIs successfully completing the training program and certification. Additionally, 23 bilingual FIs successfully completed the NTP Spanish certification process.

5.2.1 Staffing

For each NTP training session, staff included a session leader, a logistical assistant, a lead technician, a certification coordinator, and a bilingual trainer.

The session leader was responsible for overall management of the session, including coordinating logistics, addressing any trainer or FI performance deficiencies, and providing daily reports on training progress to project management.

The logistical assistant worked closely with the session leader throughout training to provide overall support, assisting FIs with attendance or connection issues and ensuring all staff had the

necessary supplies. The lead technician served as the point of contact for technical issues, including the proper functioning of all equipment and programs.

The certification coordinator managed the certification process, including establishing, distributing, and updating appointment schedules; monitoring progress; and reporting the results to the session leader.

An experienced NSDUH language methodologist led the bilingual training session for bilingual FIs, with logistical and technical support from a training program and field materials or field preparations team member.

Each of the NTP training classrooms was taught by a training team consisting of a lead trainer and two assistant trainers. The lead trainer was responsible for the classroom logistics and for ensuring adherence to the training agenda. Trainers divided the responsibility for presenting the sections of the training. During paired practice exercises, trainers monitored FIs' progress and provided feedback as they worked. At other times, trainers led a small group of FIs for more focused attention and practice.

Each session included several staff who were available to join a training classroom to work with a struggling FI as needed. Other staff provided essential support for FIs or trainers encountering technical or connectivity issues to help ensure training ran smoothly.

5.2.2 Materials

Along with the NTP Training Guide (see Section 5.1.2), numerous other training materials were developed:

- Data Collection Agreements (for all new FIs to signify they agreed to follow procedures and maintain confidentiality);
- Videoconference user guide, which is located in the FI Manual (Appendix A);
- Training Workbook that contained necessary exercises, printed examples, screening scripts, and additional instructions;
- Mock Exercise Scripts (for four different mock exercises, including the screening and interview scripts for each one, provided digitally);
- FI Lab Interview Incentive Receipts (for use during independent practice interviews); and
- Certification Materials (for use in the certification process toward the end of training).

Additionally, data collection materials were provided for use during training and certification.

5.2.3 Home Study and Other Preliminary Tasks

Prior to training, each new FI was sent a home study shipment, containing the FI Manual and FI Computer Manual, and instructions for completing the FI Basics courses, a home study, registration and fingerprinting tasks, and the CIPSEA, Records Management, and Cybersecurity Awareness training courses.

After successfully completing the home study by the stated deadline, FIs were sent computer equipment, training materials, and a memo outlining the tasks to be completed prior to their assigned training session, including

- unpacking and inventorying the project equipment and training materials,
- completing the initial online courses, and
- reviewing other critical project and training preparation information.

5.2.4 Content

FIs completed the following initial online courses to set up their equipment and learn basic FI tasks:

- Welcome to NSDUH
- Using the Tablet
- Using the Laptop
- Being a NSDUH FI
- Locating Sample Dwelling Units
- Screening Housing Units

FIs completing the initial courses as scheduled attended a brief orientation session with their trainers to review the basics of using the videoconferencing platform and the expectations for their participation during training.

During the instructor-led training sessions, FIs completed the following online courses, assigned daily to provide a basis for the content presented each day:

- Managing Your Cases
- Preparing to Interview
- Conducting the NSDUH Interview
- Connecting with Respondents
- Interviewing Youth
- Handling Reluctant Respondents
- Overcoming Challenges
- Maximizing Data Quality

FIs completed the following online courses at the end of training and before their certification:

- Administrative Procedures
- Other Tablet Topics
- Group Quarters Unit (GQU) Screening
- Other Map Topics
- Result Code Exercise Entry

5.2.5 Certifications

Following training, NTP FIs were required to pass a certification, which included a screening and interview conducted with a trainer via videoconference. The FI conducted a screening in which the screening respondent was selected to participate in an interview. The FI transitioned to and administered the interview with an abbreviated audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) section. Using standardized scripts, the trainer presented the responses as the screening/interview respondent and documented any deviations from the text and protocol.



Of the 153 new FIs who attempted certifications during the NTP training sessions in 2024, 153 passed.

5.2.6 Bilingual Training and Certifications

Following their certification, new FIs hired as bilingual FIs attended an instructor-led bilingual training session to review the Spanish-language versions of the NSDUH materials and programs. FIs participated in a scripted screening and interview exercise in Spanish to gain familiarity with the Spanish terminology and pronunciations.

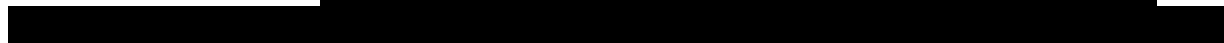
After this session, bilingual FIs completed an additional certification in Spanish, completing a screening and interview with an abbreviated version of the ACASI questions. A trained bilingual certifier acted as a respondent, using a standardized Spanish certification form that included responses a respondent might provide and fields to document any deviations from the text and NSDUH protocol.



After passing the Spanish certification, the FIs were deemed RTI-certified and were the only FIs allowed to conduct NSDUH screenings and interviews in Spanish. In 2024, 23 FIs attending the bilingual NTP training passed the Spanish certification.

5.2.7 Mentoring

After completing the NTP training program, graduates were mentored by an experienced FI, their FS, or another FS.



5.2.8 Mental Illness Calibration Study Training (MICS/Follow-up Study)

Following certifications, graduates received their data collection bulk supplies, which included a Follow-up Study FI Handbook and folder with packets of materials to use when recruiting selected IRs for the MICS. For training on Follow-up Study procedures, FIs received an email with instructions and then completed the following steps:

- Reviewed the Follow-up Study FI Handbook;
- Completed the Follow-up Study course: FIs reviewed details about the interviewer recruitment process. A video provided a demonstration of the scripted recruitment steps, which FIs could then practice during training; and
- Attended a separate training via videoconference to review the protocols and complete a paired exercise to practice implementing the recruitment steps.

5.3 Veteran Field Interviewer Training Sessions

To prepare experienced NSDUH FIs for work in 2024, the veteran FI training program consisted of various components, as described in subsequent sections. FIs progressed through training by successfully completing the following components:

- preliminary training tasks, including online courses (Section 5.3.4);
- regional kickoff meeting (Section 5.3.5);
- instructor-led training session via videoconference (Section 5.3.6); and
- individual certification (Section 5.3.7).

Training sessions were held on a flow basis, with most occurring during the first full week of January when 262 veteran FIs were trained. Several makeup trainings were held in January and February to train 5 other veteran FIs who were unable to attend the initial sessions.

5.3.1 Staffing

Veteran trainings were organized into three groups, each led by a session leader. Session leader responsibilities included overseeing trainers and classrooms and providing daily reports to project management on training progress.

The certification coordinator managed the certification process, including reviewing completed certifications and sharing results with staff.

Each classroom was taught by a training team consisting of two FSs. Other project staff assisted with logistics, training, and certifications as needed. Each session included several “on-

call” staff who provided essential support for FIs or trainers who were encountering technical or connectivity issues to help ensure training ran smoothly.

5.3.2 Train-the-Trainers Session

To prepare FSs and trainers for their roles and to instruct all project staff on the changes for the 2024 survey, staff participated in a Train-the-Trainers (TTT) session held via videoconference on November 15, 2023. The session provided time for project management to address the staff, training leaders to review the Veteran FI Training plans, and the opportunity to host small group discussions to brainstorm ideas for conducting trainings via videoconference.

Following the TTT session, trainers attended regional veteran training kickoff meetings via videoconference held on December 6, 2024. The meetings were led by members of the training program and field materials team, with assistance from other experienced project staff. The groups reviewed the Veteran Training Guide and materials, as well as training session logistics.

5.3.3 Materials

Along with the Veteran Training Guide (see Section 5.1.2), other training materials were developed:

- Training Workbook that contained necessary exercises, printed examples, and Equipment Update Instructions (for use when updating the tablet and laptop for the new year);
- videoconference user guide, located in the FI Manual (Appendix A); and
- certification materials packet with copies of necessary data collection materials (for use during certification at the conclusion of training).

5.3.4 Preliminary Tasks

During the second week of December 2023, veteran FIs received a training and bulk supplies shipment containing the following:

- memo with instructions and completion deadlines for online courses and other training preparation tasks, a detailed list of changes made to the FI Manual and FI Computer Manual for 2024, and a summary of training expectations;
- Training Workbook and other materials needed for training as described in Section 5.3.3; and
- data collection bulk supplies.

Before attending their assigned training session, veteran FIs were instructed to perform the following tasks:

- review the 2024 FI Manual and FI Computer Manual changes chart and relevant pages of the manuals;
- organize their training materials;

- review expectations for training;
- review the videoconference user guide (included in the FI Manual, Appendix A);
- complete the online courses in the order specified by the dates given; and
- organize existing data collection supplies using the list provided to see what to keep for the new year or what to recycle/discard, then unpack their bulk supplies.

The online courses for veteran FIs to complete included the following:

- Veteran FI Training Introduction
- NSDUH Preparations
- IRB & Data Quality Reminders
- Equipment Set-up

RTI-Certified Bilingual FIs also received a Bilingual Updates Handout, which listed examples of Spanish-language changes impacting FIs' ability to communicate in Spanish for 2024. FIs reviewed the changes and were instructed to read certain revised items aloud to practice a smooth and accurate delivery of the updated items in Spanish.

5.3.5 Regional Kickoff Meeting

To begin the week of training, each RS held a kickoff meeting via videoconference on January 2, 2024, for all staff in their region. A member of the training program and field materials team provided assistance, sharing the slide presentation and handling logistical tasks.

5.3.6 Content

During the veteran training sessions, FSs welcomed FIs and reviewed the plans for training. Trainers reviewed the 2024 updates and FIs had the opportunity to ask any questions to ensure understanding. Classes discussed important data quality topics, then FIs worked in small groups to discuss data quality issues and how to prevent errors in the field. Classes also reviewed Follow-up Study (MICS) protocol reminders. FSs covered topics important for their team and led a team building activity.

Two workshops were held at various times prior to the start of data collection to allow FIs to learn from and share with FIs from different regions. A total of 113 FIs attended the Success at the Door workshop and 100 FIs attended the FI Wellness workshop.

5.3.7 Certifications

All veteran FIs were required to pass an individually conducted certification via videoconference to successfully complete training and continue working on NSDUH. Each FI had to demonstrate knowledge of NSDUH protocols by completing a screening and interview with an abbreviated version of the ACASI questions. A trained certifier conducted the certification. The certification process for veteran FIs mirrored the process completed by NTP FIs (see Section 5.2.5).

Of the 267 FIs who attended the veteran training sessions in 2024, 266 passed. Two FIs failed the certification. One FI passed a recertification, and the other FI failed the recertification and

was terminated. Fourteen FIs were required to successfully complete additional training with their FS.

5.4 Ongoing Field Interviewer Training

Throughout data collection, RS and FS teams held meetings to provide training and open discussion on topics such as team performance, data quality, refusal avoidance, refusal conversion, and efficiently working case assignments. These meetings were held via conference call or videoconferencing.

5.5 Management Training Programs

The management leadership team, consisting of the Director of Data Collection; the project director; the associate project directors; the RDs; and leaders of the data quality, web data collection, instrumentation, operations, technical support, and training program and field materials teams, met regularly to share field management plans, techniques, and strategies for success. Needed information was shared with RS and FS teams to enhance their ability to provide supervision.

5.6 Challenges Related to Field Staff Training

Leading the training sessions held throughout the year required involvement of project staff with other NSDUH responsibilities. These dedicated staff trained each day and completed their other project duties at other times. The demands on trainer time were increased when they had to staff FI Labs or conduct certifications or mock exercises. Training planners tried to rotate staff across the various training assignments to avoid overloading any one individual while also asking other NSDUH staff to assist with FI Lab or certifications. This approach worked well.

Although conducting NSDUH trainings via videoconference eliminated the impact of severe weather on travel, severe weather could still affect training by causing power or Internet outages. Training staff adapted by covering missed material with an FI separately, or for veteran FIs, assigning them to a subsequent session as needed. For any outages impacting trainers, other training staff quickly stepped in to provide coverage.

6. In-Person Data Collection

This chapter presents the in-person data collection procedures followed by field staff working on the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Data collection in 2024 used both in-person and web-based procedures. Web-based data collection procedures are described in Chapter 7.

To accommodate the multimode format, in-person data collection operated with a delayed start. Lead letters were mailed at the beginning of each quarter so that households had the opportunity to participate via the web before in-person data collection began. In Quarter 1, after conducting the January 2024 training sessions with all returning veteran field interviewers (FIs), in-person data collection began on January 11, 2024. In Quarters 2 through 4, in-person data collection began approximately 1 week after the lead letters were mailed to maximize time for contacting respondents in person.

To prepare for in-person data collection, necessary materials and supplies were ordered and stored by the project for activities throughout the survey year. FIs were given assignment materials (including segment maps and case assignments) before beginning work. Veteran FIs received their materials before each quarter, and new-to-project FIs received their materials upon successful completion of training.

6.1 Contacting Sample Dwelling Units

FIs were assigned specific sample dwelling units (SDUs) to contact, with the addresses or unit and location descriptions displayed on the tablet.

6.1.1 Lead Letter

Initial contact with residents of all SDUs with mailable addresses was made through a lead letter that gave a brief explanation of the study and its methods. The letter was printed in color on U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) letterhead and signed by both the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Study Director and the RTI Director of Data Collection.

In the lead letter, adult residents of the household were presented the opportunity to participate via the web. Lead letters provided the website address and a unique participant code specific to each SDU that was needed to access the screening questions online. The letter explained that a professional interviewer may attempt to contact the household in person. The letter included additional details about the screening process as an FI would not be present to answer questions. The letter provided the phone number that respondents could call to speak with someone about their participation and a quick response (QR) code to scan for access to the initial log-in page on the survey website. The letter also emphasized that a resident must be aged 18 or older to participate as a screening respondent (SR) and that parental permission would be required for interviews with youth respondents.

For all SDUs with a complete address (i.e., not a location description), letters preprinted with the addresses were mailed via First Class Mail. Group quarters units (GQUs) and any housing units lacking a complete mailing address were not sent a letter. To allow for these cases and other instances of delivery problems, as well as any situation in which the SR had not yet seen the lead letter before a visit, each FI had a supply of generic, non-addressed letters to give to respondents.

6.1.2 Initial Approach

Before knocking on the door of an SDU, the FI selected the appropriate case for that specific unit on the tablet. Each FI possessed a personalized letter printed on SAMHSA/HHS letterhead authorizing them to work on the study and approached the door with their RTI identification badge clearly visible. The FI also carried a variety of informative materials such as Question and Answer Brochures, Highlights, and Who Uses the Data handouts.

FIs were instructed that when approaching an SDU to conduct an at-the-door screening, they should not proceed with any screening (or interview) if the circumstances at a particular SDU were unsafe, residents seemed unwell, or the FI was generally uncomfortable in the situation.

6.1.3 Introduction, Study Description, and Informed Consent

When contacting the SDU, the FI asked to speak with an adult resident (aged 18 or older) who could serve as the SR. The FI introduced themselves and the study. The FI followed the script on the tablet, which mentioned the lead letter, and read the informed consent text. A copy of the Study Description was then provided to the SR. The Study Description explained the purpose and sponsor of the data collection effort, assured the SR that all information gathered would be confidential, and gave the estimated time required to complete the screening and interview. The Study Description also stated that respondents were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Providing the Study Description and reading the scripted informed consent text from the tablet fulfilled all required aspects of informed consent for the screening portion of the study.

6.2 Sample Dwelling Unit Screening

Screening was performed at each SDU by obtaining information about the residents to determine whether any household member would be eligible for the NSDUH interview. The screening program guided the FIs through the process of asking age, sex, gender, race/ethnicity, and military status for individuals aged 12 or older who lived at the unit for most of the calendar quarter. This information was entered into the tablet.

If the screening could not be completed during the first visit (i.e., no SR was available or some other reason), callbacks were made at different hours on different days of the week to increase the likelihood of completing the screening. The only exceptions to this protocol were in case of adamant refusals or when respondents specifically stated they wished to complete the screening or interview online. Refer to Section 6.7 for details on refusal conversion procedures.

Cases that received the initial in-person visit, plus at least four callback attempts with no response, were eligible for finalization with no additional fieldwork. However, before finalizing a case, field supervisors (FSs) reviewed the tablet record of calls (ROC) of pending screenings assigned to FIs to ensure each case had been given ample opportunity to be completed, including visits at different times and days during the week. If the screening was not completed during these additional contacts, then the case was assigned a final code.

6.3 Interview Selection

Once the roster information was entered and verified, the FI started the within-SDU selection algorithm on the tablet. The tablet automatically determined, based on the composition of the household roster, whether anyone in the unit was selected for the interview.

The algorithm allowed for the selection of zero, one, or two members of a household for an interview. To identify each selected individual, the tablet displayed the person's roster number (based on the order in which household members were listed), the age, sex, race/ethnicity, and either the relationship to the SR (for housing units) or a first name (for GQUs). Also listed on the tablet was a QuestID number, which was required to start the interview on the laptop. FIs transmitted all completed screening data on the tablet to RTI each evening.

6.4 Interview Administration

6.4.1 Informed Consent and Getting Started

Once the selected individual(s) was identified during screening, the FI asked to complete the interview(s) during that visit. If this was not convenient for the interview respondent (IR), the FI entered information into the tablet ROC about possible times for future contacts. Additional visits were made at different times of the day on different days of the week in an attempt to complete the interview.

For selected adults, the FI read the Introduction and Informed Consent for IRs Age 18+ script from the Showcard Booklet to introduce the study, describe the interview process and procedures to be followed, and detail the number of people each IR represented. The Study Description was also provided (if not provided to the selected IR during screening) to meet the informed consent requirements for the interview.

If the selected individual was aged 12 to 17, the FI was responsible for obtaining verbal permission from a parent or guardian to speak to the youth about the study by using a standardized script on the tablet. The FI then provided the youth with a basic overview of the study and the interview process. If the youth was interested, the FI proceeded with the parental permission and informed consent procedures described below before interviewing the youth.

In the Showcard Booklet, separate text for parents and guardians was included in the Introduction and Informed Consent for IRs Age 12-17 script. Once parental permission was obtained by reading the parent portion of the Introduction and Informed Consent script, the FI

confirmed with the parent or guardian that an adult would be present in the home for the duration of the interview with the youth. Next, the FI approached the youth and read the Introduction and Informed Consent script to introduce the study, describe the interview process and procedures to be followed, and detail the number of youths each IR represented. The FI also provided a copy of the Study Description to fulfill all required aspects of informed consent. After obtaining the youth's consent to participate, the FI then asked the parent to leave the immediate interview setting to ensure the confidentiality of the youth's responses. The FI then began the interview.

6.4.2 Computer-Assisted Interviews

The in-person interview began in the computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) mode, with the FI reading the questions from the computer screen and entering the IR's responses into the computer. Following scripted text on the computer, the FI provided a set of headphones to the respondent and explained how to use the volume adjustment. After the IR put on the headphones, the computer-generated voice introduced the practice session, which explained how to use the various computer keys during the audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) sections. Utilizing ACASI methodology for the sensitive substance use and nonuse questions enhanced privacy since the IR listened to the prerecorded questions through the headphones and entered their responses directly into the computer. After completing the practice session, the IR then proceeded through the interview. When the IR was finished with the ACASI portion, the FI once again took charge of the computer, asking additional demographic questions as well as insurance and income questions. During both the beginning and ending CAPI portions, showcards were utilized to assist IRs in answering the questions.

6.4.3 End of Interview Procedures

After the last interview question, the interview process involved the following final steps:

- gather verification information by requesting the IR's phone number (if youth, obtained parent/guardian phone number) and confirming the IR's address in the electronic Quality Control Form on the tablet;
- give the IR the \$30 cash incentive;
- prepare the Interview Incentive Receipt, giving the appropriate copy to the IR;
- provide the adult IR or parent or guardian of a youth IR with a Question and Answer Brochure if not provided earlier;
- gather all interview equipment and materials;
- thank the IR;
- enter the final result code in the tablet; and
- complete the FI Debriefing Questions on the tablet.

Each night FIs transmitted interview data to RTI.

6.4.4 Mental Illness Calibration Study Recruitment Procedures

In 2024, the Mental Illness Calibration Study (MICS), also referred to as the Follow-up Study, was conducted with a subsample of English-speaking adult IRs to assess the questions within the NSDUH interview's mental health module. At the end of the interview, FIs read a series of screens that invited IRs who were selected for the Follow-up Study to participate in an additional interview completed by phone or videoconference by a team of specially trained clinical interviewers. These screens guided FIs through completing the following:

- introducing the additional study to the IR, including informing them that they will receive an additional \$30 for agreeing to participate;
- providing the Follow-up Study Description;
- answering any questions about participation (using a Frequently Asked Questions document as needed) and obtaining agreement to participate;
- providing a scheduling card that included a website link, QR code, and QuestID, so the IR could schedule their follow-up interview; and
- providing the \$30 incentive and receipt for the Follow-up Study.

6.5 In-Person Data Collection Management

Management of the in-person data collection effort was characterized by frequent, substantive communication within and between the various functional levels. For instance, the following management meetings were conducted via videoconference or telephone:

- FIs met with their FS at least once each week to discuss production, problems encountered and possible resolutions, feedback on past work, plans for the next week, and any administrative issues. FSs also held group meetings periodically with their team of FIs to provide information, discuss data collection topics, and encourage FIs to share tips with others on their team.
- FSs reported to their regional supervisor (RS) weekly, discussing production, costs (including cost containment issues), goals, staffing, and other administrative issues.
- Each RS held biweekly group meetings with their team of FSs to share news and goals for the region and to encourage discussion and sharing of ideas.
- Regional directors (RDs) held biweekly combined meetings with all RSs to share project news and goals and discuss in-person data collection within the regions, including accomplishments, challenges, and ideas.
- RDs met biweekly with the Director of Data Collection, the associate project director, and the project director.

Staff communicated regularly via email, videoconference, and phone. This increased awareness of project issues by effectively passing information through the various management levels. With the web-based Case Management System (CMS), all management staff had access to a tremendous amount of information on the status of events in the field.

6.6 Controlled Access Procedures

At times during the in-person data collection process, FIs had difficulty gaining access to particular SDUs. FIs confronted with challenging circumstances were instructed to be observant, resourceful, and keep their supervisors informed of the situation. Additional suggestions taken from FS experience or from the Controlled Access Guide located in the FI Manual (Appendix C) were discussed. Conversations with property managers and owners generally centered on the importance of the study, SAMHSA and RTI's emphasis on confidentiality, and an individual's right to make a personal decision about participation. Supervisors sometimes contacted property managers and owners directly to answer questions or respond to concerns.

Due to prior efforts by staff who listed the SDUs in some areas, many access problems were resolved readily. Listers recorded contact information and other steps followed to secure access so that FIs could follow the same strategies or build on already-established relations. Supervisors at the listing stage used special reports on the CMS to monitor access situations; supervisors for screening and interviewing used the same reports and recorded additional information to update the reports.

A Doorperson Letter and Doorperson Card were available to FIs to use during their work in the field. FIs carried this letter and card to support or supplement conversations with doorpersons, guards, and building representatives. The letter and card were not used with other individuals or respondents.

For continuing problems, RTI had a system to generate individualized letters and packets of information about the project. When required, FSs provided information to RSs, who then requested the packets. Upon receiving the request, a cover letter and assembled materials to fit the situation were prepared. In most cases, the packet was sent via overnight express delivery to increase the importance placed on the contents and ensure timely delivery. If requested, an electronic version of the packet was sent or a hard copy was hand delivered to the appropriate contact by the FS or FI. For situations involving university or military housing, an Institutional Review Board summary was included.

A Law Enforcement packet could be sent to local police departments or other government agencies prior to starting data collection or after receiving a request for more information from a law enforcement official. This packet informed local law enforcement about the NSDUH and encouraged cooperation and the dissemination of information about the study to appropriate personnel. Similar to other individualized packets, it included an informative letter addressed to an appropriate recipient, a brief description of the materials included in the packet, and other NSDUH materials.

Occasionally, controlled access problems required assistance beyond the RS level, so RDs—and sometimes the Director of Data Collection—became involved.

6.7 Refusal Conversion Procedures

The following procedures were in place to try to prevent refusal situations:

- All aspects of NSDUH were designed to exude professionalism and thus enhance the legitimacy of the project. All materials provided to the public were developed carefully. FIs were instructed to always behave professionally and courteously.
- The NSDUH FI Manual gave specific instructions to FIs for introducing both themselves and the study. Additionally, an entire chapter discussed “Obtaining Participation” and listed the tools available to FIs along with tips for answering questions and overcoming objections.
- During NTP FI training, several online courses and the training guide covered details for contacting SDUs and how to deal with reluctant respondents and difficult situations. During exercises and mock interviews, trainees were able to practice answering questions and using letters and handouts to obtain cooperation.

In refusal situations, staff followed these steps:

- After accepting the refusal in a positive manner and thanking the person for their time, FIs recorded detailed notes describing the situation in a Refusal Report on the tablet. FIs selected the main reason for the refusal from the following categories:
 - Too busy / no time / did too many already
 - Surveys / government invasive / teen exposure
 - Clarify confidentiality, legitimacy, selection
 - “Nothing in it for me” / uncooperative
 - Gatekeeper / parent / HH member disallow
 - Welfare / INS / ICE / USCIS concerns
 - Too ill / house messy / not dressed
 - Requested web option
 - Health concerns
 - Need to discuss with FS
- After data transmission from the tablet to RTI, the refusal category and any notes were available to the FS on the CMS. The FI and FS could then discuss the situation, with the FS suggesting additional approaches if necessary.
- Once the refusal situation was discussed, a refusal conversion letter was sent (if appropriate). During 2024, 36,174 refusal conversion letters were mailed.
- In cases where the FI encountered a very adamant (or “hard”) refusal or the respondent appeared particularly agitated about not participating or was hostile toward the FI, those cases were coded as a final refusal and not contacted again.
- If the respondent stated they wished to complete the screening or interview on the web, the case was coded as a pending refusal and a Participant Code Card was offered. A refusal letter containing the instructions for completing the web-based screening and/or interview was also sent to the SDU.

- For other refusal cases, after discussing the situation with their FS and sending a refusal letter (if appropriate), the FI attempted to contact the residents again. If the FI received another refusal or no one answered the door after multiple visits, the case was then coded as a final refusal.

6.8 Challenges Related to In-Person Data Collection

6.8.1 Size and Scope of the Project

By selecting areas throughout the entire country, many different types of situations arose that had to be resolved. With the large staff required by the size of the project, communication was vitally important.

As is common in any large in-person data collection effort, staff encountered problems such as respondent availability, SDU access (controlled or otherwise restricted, particularly barriers such as fences, gates, or locked doors and/or “No Trespassing” signs), and high-crime neighborhoods. The controlled access procedures described in Section 6.6 were used to address these problems.

In 2024, 2,639 segments (43.98 percent) contained SDUs to which access was denied for screening and interviewing. Although all efforts were made to resolve access problems, access was denied for 60,241 SDUs, or 5.97 percent of the total SDUs for 2024.

6.8.2 Interviewing Staff Turnover

The continual turnover of interviewing staff meant there were not always enough FIs to adequately cover the assignments in all areas. Once replacement staff were in place, FSs needed to spend time mentoring these new FIs rather than focusing their attention on dealing with challenging cases. FSs spend a considerable amount of time dealing with staffing issues (recruiting, hiring, mentoring new FIs, supervising new FIs more intensely, implementing disciplinary actions with staff not meeting expectations, etc.), which ultimately taps into the amount of time they can allocate to managing the more difficult cases in their regions.

6.8.3 Refusals

Refusals at the screening and interviewing stage have historically been a problem for NSDUH (as is common with many other national-level household surveys).

RSs and FSs used refusal reports in the CMS and followed procedures in Section 6.7 to assist them in developing strategies for FIs. Reasons for refusal included the following:

- respondents felt they were too busy and did not have time to participate;
- respondents felt they had already been inundated with market research and other survey requests;
- increased concern about providing personal information due to raised awareness of identity theft and hacking or leaks of government and corporate data;

- concerns about privacy and increased anti-government sentiment, including among immigrant populations; and
- health and safety concerns.

6.8.4 Patches

The following patches were released to the screening program during the 2024 data collection period:

- April 2024 (version 11.20231030.49): Corrected an issue with DK/REF selections for race, Hispanic and/or military on roster confirmation screen for Spanish text. Also automatically adjusted [To] date and time based on [From] date or time selections when appointments were entered.
- October 2024 (version 11.20241009.50): Updated the OMB expiration date.

The following patches were released to the computer-assisted interviewing (CAI) program during the 2024 data collection period:

- February 2024 (CAI version 40.09): Updated to correct an issue discovered in an Early Data Review in which a portion of the data was not being recorded in the normal manner. No interview data was lost.
- June 2024 (CAI version 40.10): Updated to revise four questions in the ACASI section of the interview, two questions within the Alcohol and Drug Treatment module, and two questions within the MICS module. These questions were revised to further clarify the questions being asked.
- July 2024 (CAI version 40.11): Updated to account for the MICS response rate change.
- October 2024 (CAI version 40.12): Updated the OMB expiration date.

6.8.5 Sample Design Concerns

Departures from planned sample sizes typically occur for several reasons, including sampling variability, access problems (e.g., in gated communities or college dormitories), and variations in expected response rates.

A total of 6,000 area segments were used for the 2024 NSDUH sample primarily because web response rates were lower than in-person response rates, as expected. For more details on the 2024 NSDUH sampling process, refer to the *2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Methodological Resource Book, Section 2: Sample Design and Experience Report* (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2025).

7. Web-Based Data Collection

This chapter presents the web-based data collection procedures implemented for the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) approved the use of web-based data collection, which followed the same basic steps as in-person data collection, but the procedures were modified for the web environment.

7.1 Contacting Sample Dwelling Units

7.1.1 Lead Letter

At the beginning of each quarter, lead letters were mailed to all sample dwelling units (SDUs) with a mailable address. Adult residents of the household were presented with the opportunity to participate via the web. More information on the content of the lead letter is provided in Section 6.1.1.

7.1.2 Follow-up Mailings

In addition to the lead letter, a few weeks after the start of each quarter, all SDUs with mailable addresses were sent a follow-up mailing as a reminder to complete the screening. Once a week for the next 3 weeks following the first follow-up mailing, SDUs that were not assigned to a field interviewer (FI) for in-person data collection and for which a resident had not yet completed the web-based screening were sent additional follow-up correspondence, except for Quarter 4, when respondents only received 2 weeks of additional follow-ups. A final mailing was sent to all pending SDUs, including those assigned to FIs, at the beginning of the final month of the quarter. The final mailing included the data collection end date for that quarter. Once an adult resident completed the web-based screening or the SDU was assigned to an FI for in-person contact, the screening follow-up mailings were no longer sent to that SDU.

If selected interview respondents (IRs) did not complete the web-based interview immediately following the completion of the web-based screening, a follow-up letter was mailed to the sampled SDU member, addressed to the resident by age (e.g., 46-year-old resident, parent of 14-year-old resident). Follow-up mailings sent to parents of selected youth IRs explained the parental permission and youth assent requirement and provided instructions for completing that process. Follow-up mailings were sent to the SDUs once a week for 3 weeks from the day the screening was completed.

All follow-up mailings contained the survey website address and the SDU's participant code. Follow-up letters also provided the HelpDesk phone number that respondents could call to speak with someone about their participation. Respondents who called the HelpDesk and stated they did not wish to participate had that refusal noted in the project database, so they would no longer receive additional follow-up correspondence.

7.2 Sample Dwelling Unit Screening and Selection

Like the in-person screening respondents (SRs) and IRs, all web-based SRs were aged 18 or older, and subsequent web-based IRs were aged 12 or older. Unlike in-person SRs and IRs, web-based SRs and IRs needed to be able to read English or Spanish to participate. Given this requirement, respondents who were blind, unable to read, and/or did not have Internet access or their own Internet-compatible device (smartphone, tablet, computer, etc.) were unable to participate in web-based screenings and interviews.

An adult resident of the SDU who chose to participate accessed the web-based screening program from any device with Internet access (e.g., smartphone, tablet, computer). At the initial log-in page on the survey website, an adult resident of the SDU (now acting as the SR) entered the participant code found on the lead letter or follow-up correspondence. Next, the SR confirmed they were an adult resident of the listed address for the SDU and read the informed consent text for the web-based screening. The SR was then asked to provide basic demographic information for each household member aged 12 or older. The web-based screening program guided the SR through the same roster questions included in the in-person screening program, with the question wording slightly altered to accommodate self-administration.

Once the SR confirmed the roster information, the web-based screening program automatically determined, using the within-SDU selection algorithm, whether anyone in the SDU was selected for the interview.

The algorithm allowed for the selection of zero, one, or two household members for an interview. The selected IRs were identified on the interview selection screen according to their age and relationship to the SR (14-year-old child, 46-year-old spouse, etc.) and clearly labeled as Interview A and/or Interview B. Unique interview links were displayed on the screen for each selected IR. If one or both adult IRs were not the SR, the SR was asked to inform those adult IR(s) verbally of the interview selection. The selected IR(s) could access their interview later (until the end of the data collection period) by using the website address, entering the participant code unique to that SDU, and clicking on their assigned interview link.

For screenings that resulted in a youth being selected for an interview, the SR was informed that the parent and the youth must call together and speak with an RTI data collection interviewer (DCI) in RTI's Call Center Services unit before proceeding with the interview. The SR was asked to voluntarily provide their first name and telephone number at the end of the web-based screening for the DCI to call to conduct the parental permission and youth assent process over the phone. SRs were not required to provide this information.

7.3 Interview Administration

7.3.1 Informed Consent and Getting Started

7.3.1.1 Adult Interview Respondents

If the SR was selected for the interview, that person could immediately begin the informed consent process and the web-based interview by clicking on their assigned link. If an IR was unable to begin the interview immediately after the screening, the IR could access their interview at a later time of their choosing (until the end of the data collection period) by using the website address and participant code provided on the lead letter and follow-up correspondence.

After clicking the link, each IR reviewed the Intro to Computer-Assisted Interviewing (CAI) text, which served as the informed consent documentation for the web-based interview. This text provided many of the same elements as the informed consent text read to in-person IRs by FIs while incorporating text specific to a web-based interview.

The Intro to CAI text asked IRs to confirm they were aged 18 or older and were at home in a private location where no one else could see their answers. IRs were encouraged to complete the interview in one sitting. The Intro to CAI text advised IRs that they would be automatically logged out of the interview after 15 minutes of inactivity and that after 4 weeks of inactivity, all responses entered to date would be deleted for security purposes. IRs were able to return at any time after 4 weeks of inactivity had elapsed, but they had to start the interview from the beginning.

The Intro to CAI contained a link to the NSDUH Study Description, which, when clicked, appeared in a separate window for IRs to review, download as a PDF, or print at their discretion.

The Intro to CAI text advised IRs that some of the questionnaire content was potentially upsetting, and information for SAMHSA's treatment referral helpline was provided if the IR wished to speak with a mental health professional. Additionally, IRs were provided the telephone number for RTI's Office of Research Protection to discuss their rights as study participants as needed.

At the end of the Intro to CAI text, IRs were asked to confirm that they were aged 18 or older, were a current resident of the SDU, were at home in a private location, and had read and understood the information provided about participating in the web-based interview. After the IR clicked an acceptance box, the IR advanced to the next screen. IRs who did not wish to proceed were given the option to exit the interview at that time.

As an additional layer of security, after advancing past the Intro to CAI text, each adult IR was required to set a unique four-digit personal identification number (PIN) of their own choosing before beginning the interview questions. This prevented anyone else from accessing the interview and seeing answers to questions. However, no one at RTI could access these PINs, so there was no way to assist IRs who set the PIN but then could not remember it. After 4 weeks

of inactivity, IRs who forgot their PIN could start the interview over from the beginning and set a new PIN.

7.3.1.2 Youth Interview Respondents

If one or both of the SDU members selected for an interview were youths aged 12 to 17, verbal parental permission and youth assent were required via telephone before the youth could participate in the interview. Using a toll-free number, the parent and the youth were required to call together to speak with a DCI before proceeding with the interview.

If the SR chose to provide a contact phone number at the end of the screening process, a DCI also attempted to call that number to conduct the parental permission and youth assent process. The database containing the contact information provided by SRs restricted the availability of that information, so outbound calls could not be made more than once every 3 days until the end of the data collection period or until parental permission and youth assent were completed. If the outbound call was placed and no one answered, the DCI left a brief, scripted voicemail message asking for a callback.

All elements of the parental permission and youth assent process were scripted for the DCIs. Bilingual DCIs were available to assist parents and/or youth IRs who wished to complete the process in Spanish. Once the parent and DCI were on the phone, the DCI confirmed the SDU address and participant code. In situations where a parent did not live in the SDU, the DCI identified and asked to speak with a legal guardian. Parents with two youth IRs selected in the same SDU were asked to have both youths available during the same phone call. If both youth IRs were not available, the parent would need to conduct one phone call for each youth.

The Informed Consent script read to the parent explained the nature of the questions and provided the following expectations:

- the parent and the youth were at home during the interview;
- if the parent completing the permission process would not be the parent home during the interview, the parent on the call would verbally inform the other parent about the youth's participation;
- the youth would complete the interview in a private location; and
- parents would not view the youth's answers.

The parental permission script also referenced the availability of the treatment helpline and provided the phone number for RTI's Office of Research Protection.

After the parent provided permission for the youth to complete the interview, the DCI then read an assent script to the youth IR about the content of the interview. The script included many of the same elements as the informed consent text read to in-person IRs by FIs while incorporating text specific to a web-based interview. The script also included expectations and information similar to those in the script read to the parent.

Once parental permission and youth assent were given verbally, the DCI recorded that parental permission and youth assent had been provided for the interview in the project database. At that point, the youth interview could be accessed on the survey website.

A text version of the youth assent script was also displayed within the interview for the youth IR to read and acknowledge before beginning the interview questions. After clicking an acceptance box, the youth IR advanced to the next screen. Those who did not wish to proceed were given the option to exit the interview at that time. Just as adults did, each youth IR was required to set a unique four-digit PIN of their own choosing before beginning the interview questions as an additional layer of security.

7.3.2 Completing the Web-Based Interview Questions

After each IR reviewed the Intro to CAI and set a four-digit PIN, the IR self-administered the NSDUH interview modules. The IR read each screen on their own with no audio available. Some design changes were made to optimize the experience for each IR, particularly those with lower literacy levels who may have benefited from the audio computer-assisted self-interviewing text-to-speech element of the in-person interview. These design changes included the following:

- added bold and blue-colored text to draw attention to key words;
- transitioned some questions from several screens to a more user-friendly grid format to limit repetition;
- spread text-heavy items, such as the Intro to CAI, across multiple screens to avoid excessive scrolling; and
- added phonetic spelling of problematic words or phrases for some questions.

Before particularly sensitive modules in the web-based interview, prompts displayed to remind IRs to be sure they were in a private location. Also, as with the in-person interview, IRs had the option to enter “don’t know” or “refused” for any question.

For security purposes, when the IR concluded the more sensitive modules of the web-based interview, those modules were locked so the IR’s answers could no longer be accessed. Similar to the in-person interview, the IR had the option to request assistance from a proxy—another informed adult resident of the SDU—for the insurance and income questions. If the IR chose to use a proxy, that proxy was not able to move backward within the interview to see answers to any previous questions. Once the insurance and income questions were completed, the proxy was asked to allow the IR to complete the remaining screens at the end of the interview.

7.3.3 Incentive Procedures for Web Interviews

At the end of the interview, the IR selected a preferred method for receiving the \$30 incentive—a Visa or MasterCard gift code sent to the IR’s email address of choice (for youth IRs, the gift code was sent to a parent’s email address) or a physical Visa or MasterCard gift card delivered to the SDU and addressed to the IR (using age only). The email and letter text included with the gift code or the physical gift cards thanked the IR for participating and provided instructions for redeeming their chosen incentive.

Screens at the end of the web-based interview collected information from each IR to allow for the delivery of their chosen incentive (confirmed a mailing address for physical gift cards or requested an email address for electronic gift codes). This incentive-related information was secured separately from interview responses and routed to fulfillment staff for processing.

7.4 Web Data Collection Management

A team of dedicated survey managers closely monitored the progress of web-based screenings and interviews throughout the data collection period and was responsible for the following tasks:

- reviewing production reports for web-based data collection and investigating any anomalies as needed,
- monitoring completed interview data for consistency and reporting potential data quality issues,
- overseeing incentive processing and communicating with fulfillment staff,
- ensuring that the screening and interview follow-up mailings remained on schedule,
- training HelpDesk DCIs and coordinating HelpDesk staffing with the Research Operations Center management team,
- monitoring HelpDesk production to ensure that respondent calls were handled appropriately, and
- reviewing respondent refusals from calls to the HelpDesk and recording them in the project database.

The web-based project Case Management System (CMS) contained information on the status of cases assigned to web-based data collection. Additional details on the CMS are provided in Section 9.3.

7.5 Technical Support and Refusal Conversion Procedures

Because FIs were not present to assist SDU members with questions, an important feature of web-based data collection was the availability of a toll-free number for technical support and answers to questions about participation. DCIs were trained to answer questions in the same way that FIs answered respondent questions in the field. DCIs referred callers to the NSDUH Respondent Website, where respondents found the same information contained in the printed materials that FIs carried with them during in-person data collection.

DCIs were trained on basic technical support techniques, such as helping respondents navigate to the survey website, enter their participant code, and log back into the survey if they unintentionally exited. If a DCI was unable to resolve a respondent's technical issue, the DCI alerted the web-based data collection management team or technical support group. A team member then followed up with the respondent or provided the DCI with further instructions on how to assist the respondent.

7.6 Challenges Related to Web Data Collection

Consistent with other web-based surveys, response rates for web-based data collection were lower than NSDUH's typical in-person response rates. To encourage participation via the web, some contact materials contained color graphics in an effort to draw a respondent's attention. Some follow-up mailings were printed on a large-format postcard to differentiate it from other mail. A quick response (QR) code was included on screening follow-up mailings to offer an easy way to access the initial log-in page on the survey website from a mobile device. A Participant Code Card was provided for FIs to use in the field with adult respondents who requested the web option or said they did not want to participate in person.

The procedures for obtaining parental permission and youth assent were developed to ensure the protection and privacy of selected youth IRs. However, the procedures did require both the parent and the youth to be at home and available to speak with a DCI during the same phone call. Although DCIs did not receive feedback from respondents indicating that this procedure was burdensome, the requirement likely reduced youth response rates because of the additional step involving a phone call before completion of the web-based interview.

8. Data Collection Results

8.1 Overview

By following the data collection procedures already discussed, 1,009,122 dwelling units (DUs) were selected for the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). As shown in [Exhibit 8.1](#), 927,672 units were identified as eligible during the screening process. Eligible units could not be vacant or occupied only by active-duty military personnel and had to meet other similar criteria detailed in Section 8.2. From this number of eligible units, 203,743 were screened successfully, and 131,170 household members were selected for the interview. From this number, 42,265 interviews were completed in person, and 27,976 interviews were completed via web-based interviewing, for a total of 70,241 completed interviews.

8.2 Screening, Interview, and Overall Response Rates

8.2.1 Screening Response Rates

The screening response rate (SRR) is the total number of completed screenings divided by the total number of eligible DUs. The eligible DUs are computed by the sample dwelling units (SDUs) minus those SDUs not eligible to be included in NSDUH. Ineligible SDUs include vacant DUs, DUs that are not a primary residence, buildings that are not DUs, group quarters units (GQUs) listed as housing units (HUs), HUs listed as GQUs, DUs occupied only by military personnel, other ineligible HUs (e.g., GQU is found to be institutionalized, DU is outside of segment boundary, DU is a duplicate of another DU), and those SDUs where the residents will live there less than half of the quarter.

As a brief summary, [Exhibit 8.1](#) lists the sample totals and the national SRRs and interview response rates (IRRs) for the 2021, 2023, and 2024 surveys. The final national SRRs for the 2024 NSDUH were 21.96 percent (unweighted) and 21.91 percent (weighted).

8.2.2 Interview Response Rates

The IRR is the number of completed interviews divided by the total number of eligible interview respondents (IRs) chosen through screening. Any ineligible IRs (e.g., adults in the military and youths younger than 12) are subtracted from the total. The national IRRs for the 2021, 2023, and 2024 NSDUHs are shown in [Exhibit 8.1](#). The final national IRRs for the 2024 NSDUH were 51.21 percent (unweighted) and 51.54 percent (weighted).

8.2.3 Overall Response Rates

The overall response rate (ORR) is the SRR multiplied by the IRR. [Exhibit 8.1](#) presents the unweighted and weighted ORRs for the 2021, 2023, and 2024 NSDUHs. The final national ORRs for the 2024 NSDUH were 11.25 percent (unweighted) and 11.29 percent (weighted).

Exhibit 8.1 Summary of 2022-2024 NSDUH Results

Result	2022		2023		2024	
Eligible DUs	864,285		804,971		927,672	
Completed Screenings	217,457		198,246		203,743	
In-Person	132,277		124,105		113,502	
Web	85,180		74,141		90,241	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Screening Response Rate	25.16	25.46	24.63	24.36	21.96	21.91
Selected Respondents	150,789		135,737		131,170	
Completed Interviews	71,369		67,679		70,241	
In-Person	41,121		43,255		42,265	
Web	30,248		24,424		27,976	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Interview Response Rate	47.33	47.43	49.86	50.45	51.21	51.54
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Overall Response Rate	11.91	12.08	12.28	12.29	11.25	11.29

DU = dwelling unit.

Note: When web survey DU eligibility could not be verified, the state-level DU eligibility rates from the in-person survey were applied. As a result, approximately 85 percent of DUs with unknown eligibility were assigned as eligible DUs. The remaining DUs with unknown eligibility were assigned as ineligible DUs and reported as "Other, Ineligible."

9. Quality Control

Although every step of data collection was designed to collect the most accurate and reliable data possible, the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) included specific quality control processes, which are described in this chapter.

9.1 Field Supervisor and Interviewer Evaluation

Throughout the year, field supervisors (FSs) evaluated the performance of field interviewers (FIs) and provided ongoing coaching and feedback.

9.1.1 Regular Meetings

Active FIs and FSs had at least one regularly scheduled weekly meeting conducted via videoconference or by telephone. During this meeting, FIs reported progress made toward completing the work; reviewed production, time, and expense information; discussed problems; and asked any questions that had emerged. FSs provided feedback on the progress and quality of work and offered solutions to problems and questions encountered. FSs also shared any information from project managers, such as approaching project deadlines.

Regular weekly meetings were also held between regional supervisors (RSs) and FSs. FI production and performance, budget considerations, cost containment issues, and any known problems were discussed during these conferences.

9.1.2 New-to-Project Training and Training Evaluations

At the new-to-project (NTP) training, FI performance was monitored closely and consistently. Training classes were small enough to observe and evaluate each FI's individual performance and comprehension. [REDACTED]

The certification process at the end of training (see Section 5.2.5) involved a formal one-on-one evaluation of each FI by a trainer and consisted of a mock screening and interview. All FIs were required to pass certification to have successfully completed training. In addition, NTP graduates were mentored by an experienced FI, their FS, or another FS (see Section 5.2.7) to reinforce the study protocols learned during training.

9.1.3 Veteran Training and Training Evaluations

Veteran FIs were tested and trained to be sure they met the standards necessary to serve as NSDUH interviewers in 2024. FIs were approved to work in 2024 only after they successfully completed all veteran training courses (see Section 5.3.4), attended their training session (see Section 5.3.5), and completed a certification consisting of a mock screening and interview with a trainer (see Section 5.3.6).

9.1.4 Field Interviewer Observations

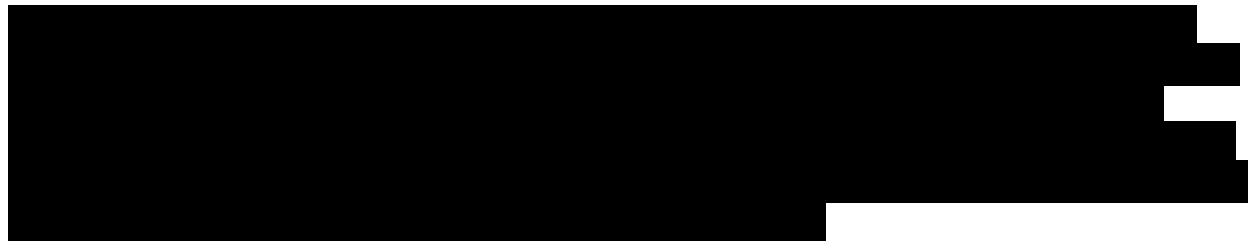
In-person observations of FIs at work provided both an assessment of FI performance and insights about the performance of the survey programs and procedures.

A total of 71 field observations were conducted nationwide in 2024. These included observations of FIs completing 214 screenings and 99 interviews. Observers included RSs; FSs; training program and field materials, operations, instrumentation, and technical support team members; or other RTI International staff. Observers used specific forms to note FI performance on project protocols. Data from completed forms were used to assess current levels of FI knowledge and develop training plans to improve FI skills in problem areas.

To maintain consistency, observers used an Observer Reference Guide and a Field Observer Task List when planning assignments and interacting with FIs and respondents. After leaving each sample dwelling unit (SDU), the observer provided the FI with feedback on any items performed incorrectly and instructions on the proper procedures. This discussion took place before approaching the next SDU to allow the FI the opportunity to demonstrate the correct procedure immediately after receiving feedback. Information regarding FI performance was made available to each FI's FS, who held debriefing calls with their FIs to discuss the results and ensure understanding of proper procedures.

9.2 Data Quality Team

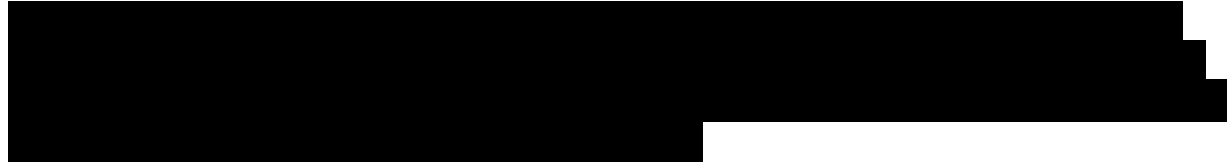
The Data Quality Team was responsible for identifying data quality and verification issues, resolving the issues, and informing management staff about them. An experienced member of the Data Quality Team provided oversight for two data quality managers (DQMs) and worked directly with the assistant directors of in-person and web data collection. The DQMs closely monitored the data quality of assigned RS areas, identifying trends in data quality errors and indications of potentially falsified screenings and/or interviews. A DQM was also responsible for operational tasks associated with the verification process, such as overseeing the call center and telephone verification activities.



The Data Quality Team distributed messages to FIs once per week for at least the first 4 weeks of each data collection quarter. These messages highlighted specific data quality topics with corresponding FI Manual references. The topics, which typically included issues of immediate concern to the Data Quality Team, were then discussed during FS team meetings.

9.3 Field Interviewer Data Quality Monitoring

The web-based Case Management System enabled the Data Quality Team and management staff to monitor the quality of each FI's work through case reports and other functions generated from data transmissions from the FIs' tablets and laptops. Reports generated from these data summarized data quality problems by error type and FI and were available for review by the Data Quality Team and management staff so that corrective actions could be taken as necessary. The information contained in these reports was addressed during weekly meetings, including those between FSs and FIs and those between RSs and FSs.



9.4 Verification of Completed Cases

In order to verify the quality and accuracy of each FI's work, a complex verification procedure was implemented. This involved the selection and verification of a percentage of final interview cases, as well as a percentage of final noninterview screening cases for each FI. Verification contacts for selected cases were made primarily by telephone.



The system allowed for the telephone verification of additional work beyond the standard selection rates. up to 100 percent of any FI's completed work.



9.4.1 Telephone Verification

Contact information used in the verification process for completed interviews was obtained from an electronic Quality Control Form completed by the FI on the tablet with each interview respondent (IR). For the final noninterview screening codes of 10 (vacant), 13 (not primary residence), 18 (not a DU), 22 (DU contains only military personnel), 26 (not eligible for the quarter), and 30 (no one selected for interview), the contact information was recorded in the tablet at the time the case was finalized. For codes 10, 13, and 18, the contact was made with a knowledgeable person, such as a real estate agent, property manager, or neighbor. For codes 22, 26, and 30, the verification was completed with a resident of the DU serving as the screening respondent.

The telephone verification was conducted by project-trained data collection interviewers (DCIs) in RTI's Call Center Services unit. Spanish translations of all materials were available for verifications with Spanish-speaking respondents.

Following the code-specific script, DCIs confirmed that the FI was professional and followed project protocols. Most cases were finalized as having no problems in 2024. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

9.4.2 Field Verification

In addition to the telephone verification procedures, additional steps were taken to ensure complete and accurate collection of data by conducting field verifications [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Data Quality Team worked with the RD as needed to select the cases to be field verified. The Field Verifier returned to the SDUs and queried the respondents to determine whether proper contact had been made by the FI in question. The Field Verifier spoke with the respondent to ensure that the FI had followed protocol and acted in a professional manner. Results of the field verification were reported to the Data Quality Team and the FS, RS, RD, Director of Data Collection, associate project director, and project director. If the Field Verifier found the work completed in the same quarter to be invalid, they reworked the case.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

9.5 Web-Based Data Quality Monitoring

To ensure that SDU members selected to complete the interview were the actual IRs who provided data, completed web-based interviews were monitored for internal consistency [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Exhibit 9.1 Overview of NSDUH Noninterview Screening Verification Process

Exhibit has been removed.

Exhibit 9.2 Overview of NSDUH Interview Verification Process

Exhibit has been removed.

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