



Tips for Engaging 17-Year-Olds in the NYTD Survey

State child welfare agencies administer the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey to a baseline cohort of 17-year-olds in foster care and again collect information from those young people at ages 19 and 21. Engaging 17-year-olds while they are still in care establishes a strong foundation for future engagement. This NYTD in Practice resource provides states and administrators of the NYTD survey tips on how to engage 17-year-olds before, during, and after survey administration.

Tips for Before Survey Administration

Before administering the baseline NYTD survey to eligible 17-year-olds, states can take steps to prepare for survey administration. These steps build a strong foundation for later engaging young people in the NYTD survey. The following tips are important to consider *before* engaging eligible young people.

- Ensure that there is a reliable process to identify eligible young people and alert necessary staff when a young person is eligible for the NYTD survey.
 - » *For example, develop an agency-wide plan to explain staff roles and responsibilities for who will use available administrative data/information to identify eligible 17-year-olds (e.g., by running weekly reports) and who, when, and how, staff will contact 17-year-olds. Automated systems can be used to send reminders (e.g., push notifications) to relevant staff when a young person is eligible to complete the survey.*
- Proactively educate staff about NYTD. This includes information about the reporting period start date, how staff can support NYTD efforts, how data benefit young people in foster care, and how staff can support young people (e.g., what young people can expect, whom to contact).
 - » *For example, email agency staff and other relevant system professionals (e.g., group home and shelter providers) with the above information and/or present at staff trainings about NYTD and the upcoming cohort (e.g., educate staff about independent living services available to the young people they serve).*
- Publicize NYTD to young people, supportive adults, and the public.

Consider hiring young people with lived experience to support the state's NYTD efforts. Young people with lived experience could co-create and provide insight on NYTD branding (e.g., social media, communications, and websites), educating young people and staff about NYTD, administering NYTD surveys, analyzing NYTD data, and connecting other young people with support.

- » *For example, technology can facilitate the distribution and transparency of information about the NYTD survey. States can create a central website that includes easily accessible information about the NYTD survey. When writing about the NYTD survey, use simple and plain language for general populations. Website content could include state-specific NYTD Data Snapshots developed by the state, links to the Children’s Bureau NYTD Data Snapshots and resources, an “update your information” page so young people can easily update their contact information (e.g., name, mailing address, email address, social media usernames/handles, and phone number), a “contact us” page with a live chat function so young people can access real-time help, and/or informational videos about the NYTD survey (e.g., [the federal NYTD videos](#) or videos co-developed with young people that clearly describe the purpose, questions asked, time commitment, and any incentives that will be provided, along with information on how to contact the relevant state child welfare staff).*
- » *For example, create and distribute materials such as flyers, magnets, business cards, and other NYTD “swag” items (e.g., water bottles) to raise visibility, awareness, and familiarity with NYTD. If the state has a website, include the website on the materials.*

Tips for Survey Administration

Survey administration begins with a series of preparatory steps that the agency can take to begin a successful survey campaign. Preparing for survey administration might look like determining staff responsibility for NYTD survey completion, drafting informed-consent language, and managing survey translation. The following tips are important to consider when *preparing* for survey administration.

- Designate an agency staff member who is responsible for getting NYTD surveys completed. This person will receive daily or weekly reports of eligible young people with relevant administrative information, such as their placement location, current contact information for their social workers, and the survey deadline (45 days after the young person’s 17th birthday).
- Train designated staff on how to administer the NYTD survey.
- Hire young adults with lived expertise to administer the NYTD survey.
- Add informed consent provisions to surveys to empower young people to make their own informed decisions about whether to participate in the (voluntary) NYTD survey.¹
- Partner with a translation service to translate surveys into various languages (based on young people’s needs in your state) and offer translation services during survey administration. Choose a translation service that is familiar with child welfare.
- Add questions to the NYTD survey to collect primary contact information (e.g., phone number, email, mailing address, social media usernames/handles) and secondary contact information (others who will know how to contact the young person at 19 and 21, such as people who are important to them, informal connections, and formal or professional connections).

Respect a young person’s preferred contact method (e.g., email, social media, text, phone), nickname, preferred name, pronouns, and name pronunciations. If a young person declines to provide information about their social media accounts, respect their privacy.

¹ Children’s Bureau. (2010). *Designing an informed consent form for use with the youth outcome survey* (Technical Assistance Brief No. 5). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/training-technical-assistance/nytd/informed-consent>

- » *For example, consider providing additional incentives to young people for providing secondary contact information.*
- Add optional questions to the NYTD survey to capture nicknames, preferred names, pronouns, and name pronunciations for future use.
 - » *For example, keep this in a secure and confidential database so you know how to refer to the young person during the next interaction.*
- Partner with current and former NYTD survey participants to create young-people-friendly materials and engaging surveys.
 - » *For example, use Canva, Microsoft Publisher, or other similar platforms.*

Once the state is ready to administer the NYTD survey, several options should be made available to young people. Regardless of the survey option used, young people in the baseline population need to be surveyed within 45 days of turning 17 years old.² The following tips are important to consider when *administering* the NYTD survey.

- Offer more than one way for young people to access the NYTD survey.
 - » *For example, surveys can be offered online (e.g., Google Forms, Qualtrics, Survey Monkey) in a mobile-friendly format, which offers larger text, full-screen viewer mode to avoid distractions from other apps, easy-to-click-on answer options designed for a touch screen, and the ability to complete the survey anywhere. Remember to use accessible and recognizable links (i.e., shorten hyperlinks and/or use QR codes).*
 - » *For example, in-person surveys can be an option and this method is particularly useful for leveraging relationships between young people and supportive adults, who can be a resource for young people completing the NYTD survey for the first time (e.g., adults can help young people navigate the survey). Ensure the survey is administered in a place where the young person feels comfortable and, if possible, let the young person choose the location (consider providing transportation assistance or traveling to the young person's location, especially if there are multiple young people at one setting who need to take the survey). If agency staff are administering the survey in a public place that sells refreshments, consider having them use agency funds to purchase a snack for the young person and remind staff not to wear their work badges and/or company-branded clothing.*
 - » *For example, surveys can be accessed over the phone. Provide a local number or helpline/warmline that will be used to contact young people in the future. Young people can be encouraged to save the number so they recognize it when outreach is conducted again and so they have a number to call when/if they need something.*

Partner with young people to create young-people-friendly survey instructions, information about confidentiality, an informed consent form or notification, and information on how the results of the surveys will be used. Maintain outreach material, social media channels, and a website updated with current and relevant information. Strive to ask young people to review materials, messaging, and media outreach efforts on at least an annual basis to ensure that they are relevant and effective.

² The Children's Bureau will accept late surveys if a youth is unable to take the survey within 45 days of turning 17 years old.

- » *For example, offer to mail the survey. Provide pre-stamped return envelopes and include instructions on how to either mail or scan the survey to return it (some phones have free scanning features or apps).*
- Build rapport with young people when administering the NYTD survey.
 - » *For example, use a warm or neutral tone of voice when administering the survey and avoid any verbal or nonverbal language that young people might perceive as judgmental. Avoid telling them how to answer.*
- Explain the purpose of the NYTD survey when administering it, including the importance of the survey and how data are collected, used, and protected.
 - » *For example, direct young people to the Children’s Bureau website where they can see the national and state data outcomes related to NYTD.*
- Provide young people with contact information if they have questions about NYTD after the survey.
 - » *For example, provide a link to the state’s NYTD website where they can visit a “contact us” page if they have follow-up questions and/or an “update your information” page if their information changes.*

Tips for After the Survey is Administered

After young people complete the survey, it is important to thank them appropriately, provide quality incentives, maintain engagement, keep them in the loop about how the data are used, and engage in continuous quality improvement. The relationships built with young people who take the NYTD survey at age 17 create the foundation needed for success when administering the surveys at ages 19 and 21. This underscores the importance of establishing a meaningful connection with young people who are 17 years old that will sustain participation in follow-up NYTD surveys at later ages. The following tips are important to consider *after* states have administered the NYTD survey.

- Thank young people for participating in the NYTD survey.
 - » *For example, use the young person’s preferred method of contact to send a thank-you card for participating in the NYTD survey.*
- Provide a variety of options so young people have a choice of incentive and how they receive it.
 - » *For example, states can provide gift cards through email (e.g., American Express, Visa, Mastercard, or a prepaid debit card with a reloadable option), an online gift-card retailer (e.g., Tango, Giftogram, Gift Card Granny, GiftCard.com) where funds can be added for young people to redeem at a vendor of their choice, in-person, or gift cards can be shipped through the mail. If the gift card is shipped, make sure to notify the young person about how long shipping will take. If needed, ask the young person if there is a secondary contact who can receive the gift card on their behalf. States can also use digital wallets (e.g., Apple Pay, Google Pay) or smartphone-based banking applications (e.g., Venmo, Zelle, Cash App, PayPal) that are compatible with a young person’s mobile device.*
 - » *For example, provide incentives within 2 weeks of survey completion.*
- In addition to incentives, partner with community organizations to send “swag” items or care packages to young people.
- Maintain relationships with the young people after they take the NYTD survey (individually and through their cohort). This is an opportunity for young people to be connected with resources when they need them and for the state to keep contact information updated.
- Send NYTD survey results to young people after the reporting period ends. Sending these data to the young people who are included in it would assure young people that their information is being used and give them a glimpse into how their experiences align and compare with those of their peers.

» *For example, co-create young-people-friendly reports and/or infographics and post NYTD results on the state’s social media accounts/the state’s NYTD website and/or share NYTD data at conferences for or about young people.*

- Use the data to create the systems (supports and resources) that young people in foster care need.

Conclusion

The tips provided in this NYTD in Practice resource can help states engage 17-year-olds before, during, and after the NYTD survey. Chief among these is leveraging the relationships 17-year-olds have with supportive adults to encourage successful engagement in the NYTD survey. Using technology to create informational videos and easily accessible websites will support transparency about ongoing connections and can prove useful in creating a foundation for locating young people and engaging them in future NYTD surveys. Providing incentives to young people can pique their interest and might encourage future responses to outreach attempts. In conclusion, states can use these tips to establish meaningful connections with young people while they are in care that will sustain participation in follow-up NYTD surveys at later ages.



About this document

This publication was created under Contract No. 47QRAA18D00AE, Order No. 140D0420F0708, funded by the Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Kayla Powell and Leroy Berrones Soto, NYTD Reviewers, wrote this NYTD in Practice resource. Katelyn Franke and Maia Hyary guided and informed the development.

For more information, please email: NYTDinfo@acf.hhs.gov

Issued: September 2023