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Assessing Legal Needs of Older Persons and Assessing the Capacity of a State's Current Legal Delivery System

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Introduction/overview

- Agenda in two parts
 - Legal Needs Assessment
 - Assessing Capacity of Legal Delivery System
- Legal Needs Assessments vs. Systems Capacity Assessments –
 - How are they different?
 - How are they linked?

Legal Needs Assessments

- **First Question:** Whose Needs? All over 60? Key Target Populations?
- **Second Question:** Why are you doing it? How do you plan to use the information?
- **Third Question:** Formal/Scientific? Informal? Combination
 - Formal/Scientific – Allows you to generalize results to entire population you are studying
 - Informal – Can't generalize from results but can provide important indicators of need, particularly for hard to reach target groups

General Cautions

whether formal or informal:

- Investigator Bias: don't enter into study with idea that you want certain results
- Methodology: choose what suits population to be studied e.g. phone, mail, in person, – considerations: literacy, likelihood of no phone, if using web/high tech, who likely to be missed, language barriers, etc.

Formal:

- Allows for generalization.
- But results only as good as your sample
- Thus, Sampling Pool/Frame (list from which sample is drawn) and Sampling are key

Sampling Frame and Sample

Ideally survey everyone, but not practical
Samples used to estimate what results
would be **IF** entire population surveyed.

- Possible sources of Sampling Pool/frame:
 - Purchase (can over sample certain groups)
 - Use limited sampling frame, but recognize limits-
who is likely not on list (e.g. voter registration
lists, Dept. of Motor vehicles, HCBC, format legal
services clients, etc.)

Drawing Sample:

- Random – each person has equal chance of being drawn
- Stratified Random -- When subgroup comparisons of interest, first separate into subgroups, then do random sampling within each subgroup (stratified random sampling, prior older clients of legal services)

Without good sampling pool and good random sample, responses are representative only of the people who responded.

Other Issues with Formal Surveys:

Neither time nor expertise to discuss:

- Sample size, and response rate: linked to how accurately you want data from a sample to estimate results you would get if studied the entire population –
- confidence interval, sampling error
- need true survey researchers for this level.

Informal Surveys

- Can't generalize from results,
- But can provide very important indicators of need,
- particularly for most needy, hardest to reach, those not already linked with aging service network.

Numerous Possibilities

- Survey Older Persons Directly

Distribute surveys or conduct focus groups (facilitated or not) with older persons in targeted locations, e.g.

- support/community centers for particular minority/ethnic groups;
- low income senior housing;
- nursing homes;
- nutrition sites used by particular minority of low income groups

Numerous possibilities

(con't)

- Survey other service providers/secondary sources,

Distribute surveys or conduct focus groups/interviews with other service providers/secondary sources, e.g.

- Providers of legal services
- ADRCs, providers of Information and referral
- Long term care ombudsman
- In Home Care providers, e.g. home care, home health, chore;
- Visiting nurses;
- Care managers
- Clergy
- APS staff
- Staff of organizations working with special groups, e.g. Alzheimer's, non-English speakers, persons with developmental disabilities.

Survey Instrument

- See the discussion in TCSG's *Best Practice Notes* (BPN) from March 2005 on

Assessing Legal Needs of Older Persons: A General Primer

- Found at:
<http://www.tcsg.org/bpnotes/march05/contentsmar05.htm>
- Can also look at samples of legal needs assessment from FL, UT, OH, & GA
 - Found at: <http://www.tcsg.org/law.htm>