

## **Handout Two: Letters for Questionnaires**

*Note: For Institutional Review Boards, correspondence to respondents in relationship to your questionnaire (e.g., pre-notification, cover, and reminder letters or email) may be part of the informed consent process. So check your IRB materials for guidelines when preparing correspondence.*

These checklists provide the elements of good pre-notification, cover, and reminder letters for a questionnaire and also a suggested order for contents.

### **1. Checklist for pre-notification letter/email:**

- Send the letter with the signature that your respondents know and trust. For electronic communication, use an electronic signature or the name and signature line of the person they know and trust. Also, for electronic questionnaires, use that person's email address in the "FROM" field if possible.
- Briefly describe the project and why it is important that they respond. (Emphasize how it is important to them, their families, and their communities as well as how their responses are important to you and your organization.)
- Explain when and how (e.g., mail, email with a link) they can expect the questionnaire and who will send it to them.
- Thank them in advance for their help.

### **2. Checklist for cover letter/email**

- Briefly describe your project and why you want respondents to reply to your questionnaire.
- Include a motivational appeal.
  - Directly ask the respondent to answer your questions.
  - Explain how the respondents' participation will help the recipient (e.g., by helping the organization improve service; making their opinions heard)
  - Appeal to the respondent's altruism by describing how his or her participation will help others. State the sponsors of the study.
- Explain how to complete the questionnaire (e.g., "click on the link below" or "complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the enclosed, postage-paid envelope.") You may want to have the link near the top of the email message.
- Describe who will see their individual responses and how you will maintain confidentiality. Usually, confidentiality is maintained by:
  - Removing identifiable information from responses before they are shown to others
  - Only reporting summary data

- Describe any risks to the respondent if he or she chooses to respond. (If you don't know of any risks, state that.)
- Describe incentives. (An incentive may include a promise to send them results of the questionnaire and how you used the results.)
- Include a statement that the participant is free to refuse to participate and can stop responding at any time.
- Request that they respond by a certain date.
- Give contact information if a respondent has further questions.

**3. Checklist for reminder letters/emails:**

- State that you are sending a reminder for them to complete the questionnaire
- Thank those who have already responded. (Note: you can send targeted follow-ups to those who have not responded, but include the thank-you statement anyway. It adds an air of politeness and it communicates to the nonrespondents that some of their peers *have* responded.)
- Request those who have not responded to do so by a given date.
- For electronic questionnaires, include a link to the questionnaire in every follow-up. For print questionnaires, you send a reminder postcard for the first follow-up and a letter with another copy of the questionnaire on the second follow-up.

## Templates

### 1. Pre-notification

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to request your help with a very important project: \_\_\_\_\_. In a couple of days, you will receive an email with a link to an electronic questionnaire from \_\_\_\_\_ (email address). This questionnaire will ask about \_\_\_\_\_ and will help \_\_\_\_\_ *[improve service; plan programs; assess the effectiveness]* Your responses will be very important \_\_\_\_\_. *[explain how the evaluation will benefit the respondent, others, and the organization that will use the questionnaire data.]*

Thank you in advance for your participation. I look forward to getting feedback from you and others who use our services. If you have questions, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at *[phone]* or *[email]*. *[Let them know if they can reply to this email message or if they need to use a different email address]*

Sincerely,

*[signature line of contact person]*

### 2 Email with link

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

A couple of days ago, you received an email message alerting you to look for an email message from \_\_\_\_\_ with a link to a questionnaire about \_\_\_\_\_. This study is being conducted by \_\_\_\_\_ in order to \_\_\_\_\_. You have been chosen to complete this questionnaire because of \_\_\_\_\_ *[e.g. your interest in the questionnaire; your recent use of services]*. Your responses are very important because \_\_\_\_\_ *[e.g. how will it help the respondent, others, and the organization.]*

Please click on the link below and follow the instructions to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire takes approximately \_\_\_\_\_ to complete.

*[questionnaire link]*

The questionnaire is being conducted by \_\_\_\_\_. Your responses will be seen only by \_\_\_\_\_. The responses of all participants will be summarized and presented to \_\_\_\_\_.

To our knowledge, there is no risk to your participation in this questionnaire. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to refuse to answer any or all of the questions.

However, we do hope you will choose complete the questionnaire. When we have completed the questionnaire, we will send you a brief description of our results. The enclosed \_\_\_\_\_[*gift card; money*] is our way of thanking you in advance for your help.

We request that you submit your answers to the questionnaire by \_\_\_\_\_[date.]. If you have questions, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at [*phone*] or [*email*] [*Let them know if they can reply to this email message or if they need to use a different email address*]

Sincerely,

*[signature line of contact person]*

### **3. Reminder**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

About a week ago, you received an email from \_\_\_\_\_ requesting your participation in a very important questionnaire about \_\_\_\_\_. If you have submitted your responses already, thank you for your participation. If you have not yet had a chance to complete the questionnaire, please do so by clicking on this link:

[questionnaire link]

We request that you submit your responses by \_\_\_\_\_. If you have questions, please contact \_\_\_\_\_. [*Let them know if they can reply to this email message or if they need to use a different email address*]

*[signature line of contact person]*