Section 4: Data Policies and Archiving

Overview

Introduction
This section covers data policies and procedures, as well as archiving your STEPS materials.

Intended audience
This section is primarily designed to be used by those fulfilling the following roles:

- STEPS Survey Coordinator
- STEPS Coordinating Committee.

Useful resources
Please contact the WHO Geneva STEPS team for a copy of the STEPS Data Policy and Procedures document.

In this section
This section covers the following topics:

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Data Policy and Procedures

As part of the collaboration between the implementing country, the survey team, WHO and other stakeholders, it is recommended to have all involved parties sign the STEPS Data Policy and Procedures document.

The document is available from the WHO Geneva STEPS team upon request, and provides guidance on data policy and sharing, information exchange and publication procedures.

Principles

The STEPS data and publication policies and procedures are based on the following guiding principles:

- STEPS data are owned by the official country-level agency (in most cases the MOH) conducting or sponsoring the survey. Major decisions regarding data release, data sharing, and data reporting are the responsibility of the agency in which data ownership is invested.
- The privacy of participating subjects must be protected.
- Data quality must be maintained.
- Public health and scientific advancement are best served by an open and timely exchange of data and data analyses.

Data release

The STEPS Survey Coordinator will deal with practical issues regarding ownership and release of STEPS data. If the STEPS Survey Coordinator moves to another institution before the survey results are made public, he/she cannot take the data with him/her.

Data sharing

In the interests of advancing public health knowledge about the risk factors measured in STEPS, WHO encourages countries to make datasets and reports from STEPS surveys available in the public domain after a defined period of time after completion of the survey.

Sharing data in public domain can be done through a variety of modes, including:
- WHO Global Data Coordinating Centre
- publications
- websites.
Archiving your STEPS Materials

Introduction
Once the survey is completed and before the team is disbanded, all records need to be properly stored in order to prevent loss.

Policies and systems
Most governments and large organisations will have their own established archival systems, in which case their facilities are likely to be your best long-term storage option. Investigate storing your data at:

- Ministry of Health
- WHO country office
- WHO regional office.

Archival period
Decide on the archival period. The duration may have been specified by your ethics authority. If not, consider twelve years. This is long enough for data to be available for further STEPS surveys, and long enough to investigate query from the results. You may wish to have a different period for soft (i.e. electronic) vs hard (i.e. printed) documents and files.

Checklist
Use the checklist below to help ensure all necessary steps have been completed.

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<th>Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Decide on the duration of storage.</td>
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</table>
| 2    | Include in the storage:  
  • At least one hard copy of all data collection forms  
  • The completed interview tracking forms  
  • Soft copies of all forms  
  • Soft copies of the final dataset and all documentation of the weighting and analysis. |
| 3    | Label the box(es) clearly with:  
  • name and date of the project;  
  • contents;  
  • names and contact details of survey coordinator and one other member of the coordinating committee. |
| 4    | Determine who is entitled to have access to the archive. |
| 5    | Place a copy of the form to apply for access in each box. |
| 6    | Provide copies of electronic files (without personal identifiers) to WHO Geneva STEPS team. |
| 7    | Inform all interested parties where the information is stored. |

Note: Make sure that participant identification information is never stored in the same location (electronically and in paper form) with the rest of the dataset.