

Decisions related to CPS Volunteering Supplement following Cognitive Interviewing

A. Supplement Transition Statement: [PRESUP](#)

The instrument has been modified so this transition statement is now on the interviewer screen at the beginning of every interview. Interviewers are instructed to read the statement to each respondent and to remind the respondent of the survey's definition of volunteering if he or she appears to have forgotten.

The wording of the statement was not changed. A wording modification in this initial statement, had one been implemented, may have caused a change in what respondents understood to be included in the survey's concept of volunteering; this would have created a break in series. With five consecutive years of comparable data in existence, [BLS](#) decided to avoid a fundamental break in the series.

B. Primary Classification Items: [S1](#), [S2](#) (and [S2A](#))

S2a will not be asked in 2007. The supplement cannot be of indefinite duration and the sponsor had to choose which questions they most wanted included. As S2a has only been asked once and was not included in the calculation of the September 2006 volunteer rate, they decided to drop S2a. While it is true that the question did elicit some affirmative responses, this would likely be true of most probes for specific activities, and one must draw the line on what to include somewhere. Religious organizations are the type most frequently reported (without S2a being asked) and the number of additional volunteers identified through S2a is relatively small. Additionally, if S2a were asked and the affirmative responses to it included in the number of volunteers, there would be a break in series and subsequent data would not be comparable to those collected in the prior five years.

While respondents misunderstood the phrase "through or for an organization" as "through a foreign organization" was reported in early administrations of this supplement, we are not aware of this continuing to be an issue now that interviewers have been made aware of the confusion and instructed to read this phrase clearly and carefully. We chose not to make any changes in these early questions, whether by changing the order of the words in the question or by dropping words that could create a break in series.

C. Secondary Classification Items: [S3](#), [S4A](#), and [S4A1](#)

To be classified as a volunteer in this supplement, a respondent simply must answer affirmatively to S1 or S2. The respondent reports the name of the organization and the interviewer determines the type. If the interviewer is not familiar with the organization,

she asks what type of organization it is. It is relatively unlikely that a respondent will report volunteering but be unable to recall either the name of the organization or the type. We do not know of problems in fielding with respondents being confused about the “for” or “through” an organization distinction.

D. Identification of the Principal Volunteer Organization: S5A, S6A and S7A

Question S5a was modified to include the word “different,” so that it reads, “During how many *different* weeks...” We believe that this change, as well as the instruction provided to the interviewers, will sufficiently address the comprehension issues that came up in testing. The instrument was modified to reiterate the reference period as frequently as possible without causing awkwardness.

Earlier testing showed that people who were unable to report their volunteer hours on a weekly basis were often able to do so on an annual basis. We believe that one of these two reporting options will suit most respondents. Some respondents will never have thought previously about the time they spend volunteering, and will therefore have trouble with any question about their hours.

E. Volunteer Activities: S8 and S8A

The paper translation of the questions that has been in use is not an official product. Its origin is unclear. That such a questionnaire exists is evidence of its necessity, therefore we are looking into having a proper translation of the questions created. It is possible that we will have a translation ready prior to September 2007 fielding; if so, that instrument will be provided to OMB.

F. Foreign Volunteering: S15, S15.5 and S16

We will leave the question as it is, as recommended.

G. Long-Distance [Domestic] Volunteering: S16.3, S16.4 and S16.5

We will leave the question as it is, as recommended.

H. Civic Engagement: S17 and S17A

No recommendations given.

J. Informal Volunteering: S18 and S18A

Question S18 was modified to read, “Since September 2007, have you worked with others from your neighborhood to fix a problem or improve a condition in your

community or elsewhere?” We believe that this change will reduce ambiguity about what types of activities should be reported and in what geographic location the activity had to take place.

K. Other Issues

The interviewer training materials and opening screen of the instrument were modified to stress the importance of getting self-responses to the supplement when possible.