

Adherence Data: Tips and Strategies

1. Website: Use the information on the website (mstinsitute.org) to guide you on the process of administering and interpreting the adherence measures. Many of your questions can be answered on the website. There are guidelines and forms available on the home page and a help menu is available to answer questions about how to navigate the website.
2. Obtaining and tracking codes to use on website: Individuals will need to be assigned codes to use when logging on to the website. These codes can be obtained from the MST Institute via email (msti@mstinstitute.org). These codes will identify you as being part of a particular organization and will restrict your access to information to that organization. If you have problems contacting the Institute via email, please call the main MST Services number (843-856-8226). Depending on whether the organization's MST license is current or not, login codes will allow organizations to access the basic website or the enhanced website.
 - a. *Logging in to the basic website*. The basic website is available to any organization implementing MST, a current license is not required to use this site. However, the organization must be registered with the MST Institute and have valid login codes. Login codes identify standard users and a supervisor user in an organization. Standard users can enter TAM and SAM data. Supervisor users can also generate aggregate TAM reports.

Codes to identify specific therapists and families are assigned by the MST Supervisor or MST Program Manager. These codes are not assigned by MSTI. Therefore, the person assigning codes should maintain a list of the names and code numbers in a secure location that can be referred to when needed. You may want to consider using family codes that are meaningful in some other way, for example, the child's medical record number.

It is important that the same codes be used each time a SAM or TAM form is entered. For example, once a code number is assigned to a particular therapist that number should not be reused if the original therapist leaves the position. In addition, the codes must be entered exactly the same each time. For example, if therapist, John Brown, is assigned a code of "01" then "1" should never be used to identify this therapist. The computer will see this as a new code.

- b. *Logging in to the enhanced website*. The enhanced website is a secure website and is restricted to organizations with an active MST license. Each individual user receives a login code and password that specifies the functions the individual can do on the website. Passwords can be changed after initial login to increase privacy. Codes for families, supervisors, and therapists are assigned by the system and are tracked by the system. Help in using the enhanced website is available on the website.

3. TAM-R Data Collection Methods: A number of strategies have been used to collect TAM-R data from families. These include telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, and sending blank surveys to the home with therapists along with a self addressed stamped envelope for families to complete and return to the MST Supervisor after the family session. Each method comes with its own costs and likelihood of error. It is up to the organization to decide which method to use, however, *under no circumstances should the family complete the survey in the therapist's presence*. The possible sources of error are described below for each method.

- a. *Telephone interview*. Telephone interviews have been used in all the MST research studies and they have the lowest likelihood of error if conducted by experienced interviewers. Tips on phone interviewing strategies are available below. The more these strategies are followed, the more likely your data will be predictive of outcomes. The costs of this method are often offset by a higher return rate.
- b. *Face-to-face interviews*. Face-to-face interviewers who use the tips mentioned below under phone interviewing strategies are also likely to have low error and a high return rate. However, if therapists are used to do the interviews there is a very high likelihood that the responses will not be an accurate description of what actually occurred during therapy. If the family's therapist is present while the caregiver completes the questionnaire, it raises the possibility that the caregiver will "feel pressured" to respond more favorably than they might feel (e.g., the caregiver may believe that responding negatively to the clinical staff member collecting the TAM-R data will somehow get a therapist, or the family, into trouble). In addition, unhealthy dynamics can occur within the team if therapists are used to collect TAM-R data on other members of their own team.
- c. *Providing blank surveys to be mailed back to supervisor*. This strategy usually has the lowest cost but also the lowest response rate. Different strategies for increasing the response rate will introduce more error. For example, if the therapist is responsible for hand carrying the questionnaire back to the supervisor, this strategy will have the same likelihood of error as having the therapist present while the family completes the questionnaire. For example, the caregiver may believe that the therapist will look at the questionnaire as soon as he/she leaves the home and, therefore, might distort answers as stated above. The recommended strategy for increasing the response rate is to have the therapist deliver the blank TAM-R and a stamped envelope addressed to the supervisor. The supervisor or an assistant makes a follow up call to the family reminding them to send in the survey. If the survey hasn't been returned in two weeks, the therapist takes out another survey and envelope.

3. Informing Families About TAM-Rs: During the case opening process, have the therapist inform the family about the purpose of the TAM-R and how they will be collected. If possible, consider including something to this effect in writing as part of the initial paperwork that is signed by the family. The following statement is being used in the MSTI TAM-R Data Collection Project and is provided as an example:

Our MST program is committed to providing you and your family the best possible services. Therefore, someone will call you periodically to ask you questions about the services you are getting and whether you feel things are getting better. Your opinions are extremely important to our efforts to improve services to families like yours.

We are working with telephone interviewers at Pioneer Marketing Research (PMR) to collect this information. Therefore, we will share your name and telephone number with them so they can call to ask you some questions about the services you are receiving. Your name and phone number are the only personal information that will be shared with PMR. Your answers to the questions will not be shared with anyone who is not directly involved in the MST program in a way in which you can be identified. The staffs at PMR, MSTI and MST are trained in the importance of maintaining confidentiality and your privacy. Your personal information will be protected with safeguards that comply with the highest standards.

You do not need to consent to the use of your personal information in this way in order to receive MST services. However, participating in the telephone interviews does ensure that you will receive the best possible service.

If you have any questions about this notice or if we can help you in any way, please call:

MST supervisor:

MST Provider Organization:

Phone number:

4. Tracking TAM-R collection: Different strategies are recommended depending on whether the team is using the basic or enhanced website.

- a. *Using the basic website.* Organizations will need to create a method to track that each family completes a TAM-R each month. One strategy that can be helpful is for the person doing the tracking to create a table that incorporates the families'

contact information, therapist name, and a list of dates the TAMR has been completed. If the organization is doing telephone interviews, this list can be kept in the interviewer's planner. This way the interviewer has family contact information with him/her at all times, and can access it to call the family for TAM-Rs after hours. If the family number and therapist name as it is entered on the website are included in the table, these numbers will be available for easy referencing when the TAM-R is entered on the website.

- b. *Using the enhanced website.* Supervisors and program managers will be able to run a tracking report from the website that will create a list of families that have a TAM-R due during a specified period of time.

5. Phone Interviewing Strategies: Using standard phone interviewing techniques reduces the likelihood of error in the information collected from families. Contacting families to get the TAM-R completed generally takes multiple efforts. Consider allocating approximately one hour per TAM-R. A phone interview manual is available by contacting msti@mstinstitute.org. A summary of phone interviewing tips follow:

- a. Call during the evenings for families who are out during the day- note that many of the TAM-R's will need to be completed in the evening.
- b. During the first interview, get information about their work schedule and when they're most available. Also, find out how late it's OK to call—some families might be OK with calls even after 9:00pm
- c. Time TAM-R administration for when therapist hasn't just been on vacation or recently sick, if possible. If the family has not had a therapy session in the last seven days the TAM-R should not be completed.
- d. Take a very nice, respectful approach to families.
- e. Introduce the choices of ratings and offer to repeat them as often as needed.
- f. Probing for a valid answer on items 1-26 is important. Missing items will cause the entire interview to be rejected by the system. If they answer "I don't know" encourage them to "pick the best answer". If they do not like the question, do not join them in criticizing the item, try to state it in a way they will understand.
- g. Explanations of questions should be minimal, and consistent to each family. If there is a question that a family wants clarification with, first restate the question as it is written while prefacing the question with a phrase such as "Do you agree with the statement" and repeating the choices. If that isn't sufficient provide a standard explanation that you use with everyone.
- h. Never attempt to be therapeutic during the interview. If the family brings up some concerns, let them know that you will relay the information to their therapist or supervisor right away
- i. Note that a high level of difficulty reaching families to collect TAM-Rs is usually correlated with engagement problems with therapist, and thus successful clinical strategies to address poor engagement will generally result in improved ability to collect TAM-R's.

-Above all, be persistent!

6. Managing TAM-R Data Collection:

- a. If the supervisor is doing TAM-R collection, consider having someone such as an administrative assistant help out with people who can be reached during the day- this person then informs the supervisor which people were hard to reach and need to be contacted after hours.
- b. Have the person administering the TAM-Rs set a specific goal for him or herself of how many calls to make a day.
- c. When the person collecting TAM-R data is not the MST Supervisor, the supervisor should hold that person accountable by receiving regular reports, e.g. they regularly report to the Supervisor how many they've collected, and how they're doing on their target # of calls per day.

5. Data Entry Tips for the Basic Website:

- a. Allow about 10 minutes per measure.
- b. The first time entering for a particular therapist, enter the therapist name as you want it to appear every time, and it will be automatically saved in the drop down menu for report generation. Write the name the same way every time.
- c. Once you have entered and submitted the data, wait for the computer to create the report. *Depending on the speed of your computer, this can take several minutes. Please wait for the report to appear before clicking submit again.*
- d. It is recommended that you print a copy of this report. This report with a summary of the items will not be available once you log off the computer session.

6. Data Entry Tips for the Enhanced Website: A help menu is provided in the enhanced website and TAM-R summary reports are stored for viewing at any time. Training is available through MSTI on using the website. Information about the training sessions can be found at <http://www.mstinstitute.org/services/training.shtml>