

Evaluation Lingo

Definitions of selected terms used in the “how,” “when,” and “who” of evaluation planning are listed below.

Active vs. passive parental consent: Active parental consent requires the parent to sign an agreement of informed consent giving approval for their child to participate in an evaluation activity; parents must *opt in* to the evaluation. Passive parental consent allows parents to *opt out* if they do not want their child to participate. This is typically done by giving parents a letter describing the evaluation and saying that their child will be invited to participate unless the parent returns a form stating otherwise.

Anonymous vs. confidential: “Anonymous” indicates that the identity of the respondent or participant is unknown to anyone. For example, students are instructed to not put their names on a survey. Data are “confidential” if the identity of the respondent or participant is known to those who control the data, but is not disclosed to others. For example, using student ID numbers for a pre/post-test survey instead of names can still link the data and the student’s identity. School administrators can link the ID numbers to the student names, but names are not shared with the evaluation team and are not reported with the evaluation results.

Informed consent: Informed consent is an agreement by the participants in an evaluation of the use of their confidential information and other data, for stated purposes, and in light of possible consequences prior to the collection and/or release of this information in evaluation reports.

Instrument: The tool being used, such as a specific questionnaire or an observation checklist.

Item and item stem: An item is an individual question or statement on a questionnaire. Some items are phrased as questions (e.g., “What is your gender?”), while others are phrased as statements (“I was treated with dignity and respect: Agree or Disagree”). Items can also refer to individual rows in a matrix format. An item stem refers to the first part of a multi-component item, often displayed in a matrix format.

Response option or response category: The choices provided as a response to an item. For example, the list of possible answers given on a multiple choice test, or a scale of “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”

Response rate: The percent of eligible individuals who completed an instrument. For example, if a program served 100 students and 80 of them completed the post-test survey, the response rate would be 80%.

Retrospective post-then-pre-test: Participants are asked to recall their level of knowledge/attitude/skill prior to starting the program, and after participating in the program. This is typically done by repeating the same set of items twice, once labeled as “before” and once as “after.”

Quantitative and qualitative: Quantitative data is represented by numbers. Qualitative data are collected and presented in narrative, not numerical, form, such as focus group or key-informant interview results, or written responses to open-ended survey questions.

References: GTO IPV/SV Evaluation Step Grantee Draft; Evaluation Glossary, University of Western Michigan Evaluation Center, <http://ec.wmich.edu/glossary/glossaryList.htm>; and Evaluation Resources, University of Wisconsin Extension, <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/index.html>