

Drug Timeline Followback (TLFB): Interviewer Administered Instructions for Completing the TLFB Calendar

Note: Research over the last 40 years has shown that most individuals using drugs can complete a self-administered or Internet version of the TLFB. However, there are some individuals where an interviewer-administered version can aid in helping them complete the form.

The TLFB instructions in this form can be used when (a) a study protocol requires an interviewer to complete the TLFB with the person, (b) individuals have trouble reading the TLFB instructions, or (c) individuals cannot complete the TLFB on their own (e.g., older adults, cognitively challenged).

A shorter self-administered set of instructions is also available on our website at (<http://www.nova.edu/gsc>).

Introduction

- To help us evaluate your drug use, we need to get an idea of what your use was like in the past **XX** days. To do this we use a calendar like this one (**show sample calendar**).
- During this time period we want to get an idea of on how many days you used any drugs.
- **This is not hard to do, especially when we use a calendar to help you recall your drug use.**
- The idea is that for **each day** on the calendar we will record whether you “used” or “did not use” drugs.
- On days when you **did not use drugs**, we will write a **“0”** in the box.
- On days when you **did use drugs**, we will put a **“✓”** in the box.

Your Best Estimate

- In filling out the calendar, we want you to be as accurate as possible. However, we recognize that it is not always easy to recall events with 100% accuracy, whether it is drug use or anything else.
- **What is important is for us to write something in for every day.**
- If you are not sure whether you used a certain drug on a Thursday or a Friday of a certain week, **GIVE IT YOUR BEST GUESS!**

Starting the Calendar: Review the Sample Calendar First

Before starting, let’s look at what a completed sample calendar looks like

2014	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1 0	2 0
S	3 ✓	4 Labor Day 0	5 ✓	6 ✓	7 ✓	8 0	9 ✓
E	10 ✓	11 ✓	12 ✓	13 ✓	14 0	15 ✓	16 ✓
P	17 ✓	18 0	19 0	20 0	21 0	22 ✓	23 ✓
T	24 0	25 ✓	26 6	27 0	28 0	29 0	30 ✓

Let’s begin!

- What I am going to do with you is to record your drug use over the past **## days** on this real calendar.
- Remember, on days when you did not use **ANY** drugs we will write write **“0,”** and on days you did use any drugs we will write **✓**
- As I said before, **in estimating your drug use we want you to be as accurate as possible.**
- The time period we are talking about on the calendar is from _____ to _____
- Let’s start with yesterday (**insert date**) and go back **## days. (Interviewer mark these dates on the actual TLFB calendar and show the calendar to the person)**
- Do you have any special holidays or dates you want to mark on the calendar to help you better recall your drinking during the past **## days? (person replies and the interviewer enters the days in the calendar as appropriate)**

Additional Tips for Filling Out the Calendar

- **The Calendar Can Be Completed in a Flexible Manner:** People can start from either end of the calendar and work forward or backward, or jump around from month to month, week to week.
- If someone has trouble recalling his/her drug use, try working back from today’s date. Say, “What about this past month; what was your drug use like then?” The

most recent months are often most familiar, and the person might find it easier to reflect upon those periods first.

- Several memory aids were developed to help people recall their drug use using the TLFB. Descriptions of those memory aids appear on the next pages.
- If you have an **appointment book**, a **daily diary**, or **smart phone** you can **use them** to help you recall your drinking.
- **Holidays** such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas **are** marked on the calendar to help you better recall your drug use. You can also write in personal holidays and events such as birthdays, vacations, celebrations, major sporting events, and so on.
- People who have fairly **regular drug use patterns** can use them to complete the calendar. For example, you may have a different **weekday vs. weekend drug use pattern**, or you may use only on certain days.
- **Important Last Reminder:** Before letting the person leave, **double-check that ALL days have been filled in on the calendar.**

Drug Use Timeline Followback Recall Aids

DAILY CALENDAR: The daily calendar provides a temporal framework for recalling events and patterns related to a person's drug. Some people have found it useful to consult their personal appointment or date books or smartphones as aids in completing the calendar. **Use of aids is encouraged.**

KEY DATES: Use of holidays, birthdays, newsworthy events and other personal events that are meaningful to people can assist recall of their drug use. In this regard, the TLFB calendar and computerized program displays standard holidays on the calendar and, as part of the instructions, people can be asked to identify their own personal holidays and significant events. These latter events may be generic (e.g., major sporting event, major news events) or idiosyncratic events (e.g., person's own or others' birthdays, dates of important personal events such as changing jobs, buying a house).

BLACK AND WHITE DAYS: People are asked to recall lengthy periods of time when they completely abstained from using drugs.

DISCRETE EVENTS AND ANCHOR POINTS: Like holidays, use of specific events such as arrests, hospitalizations, illnesses, employment, and treatment participation can be used to help people identify periods of extended drug use or abstinence. Anchor points can be used to identify use that occurs during, before and after events (e.g., job loss, marital breakup) or notable drug use episodes (e.g., started using after the death of a close relative).