

2020 Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) Grantees

Using nFORM 2.0 for Local Evaluations

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OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE

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Contents

Overview.....	1
How can our grant’s local evaluator access nFORM 2.0?	1
How can we categorize clients by service assignment in nFORM 2.0?	1
Should we assign clients to service assignments during the startup period for impact evaluations?.....	4
How can we monitor clients by service assignment in nFORM 2.0?.....	4
How do we reassign clients in waitlist control groups so they can receive services after the study ends?.....	4
Can I use survey data from nFORM 2.0 in my local evaluation?	5
When should we administer surveys in nFORM 2.0 to clients participating in our local evaluation?	6

Tables

1	nFORM 2.0 service assignments.....	2
2	Client surveys, by client population.....	6
3	Timing of survey administration, by service assignment	7

Overview

This resource addresses common questions that Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) grantees have about using nFORM 2.0 to manage their local evaluations. Grantees conducting local evaluations should review this resource alongside the [nFORM 2.0 User Manual](#) and the [Performance Measures and Data Collection Logistics Manual](#) located on the nFORM 2.0 [help page](#). *Each grantee should work with their Family Assistance Program Specialist (FPS) and evaluation technical assistance partner (ETAP) to clarify how the following information applies to their specific local evaluation.*

Questions?

After reviewing this resource, please contact the nFORM 2.0 help desk with any questions about using nFORM 2.0 for your local evaluation by submitting a ticket on the [help page](#) in nFORM. The help desk team can assist you with, for example, creating or assigning service assignments and using the Local Evaluation Enrollment Operational Report. Please also consult with your FPS and ETAP about your local evaluation data collection plans. Together, we are happy to assist you with any questions or concerns, so your evaluations run as smoothly as possible!

How can our grant's local evaluator access nFORM 2.0?

Grantees may assign one or more of their allotted nFORM 2.0 user accounts to their local evaluator(s). Allowing local evaluators to access nFORM 2.0 is a recommended best practice because it enables evaluators to monitor the evaluation and access information that could be helpful in locating study participants at follow-up data collection points. nFORM 2.0 has three types of user accounts with varying levels of access to information and functionality in the system (the [nFORM 2.0 User Manual](#), Module IV, describes user types). The grantee site administrators are responsible for creating nFORM 2.0 user accounts for staff, including the evaluator(s), and determining the type of account each person should have for nFORM 2.0.

How can we categorize clients by service assignment in nFORM 2.0?

Grantees are required to use nFORM 2.0 to track enrollment and participation for all clients who receive services funded by the HMRF grant, whether or not clients are participating in a local evaluation. Grantees are also required to use nFORM 2.0 to collect data on individuals who are participating in a local evaluation but who are not receiving HMRF-funded services.¹ For example, grantees should enroll clients who are not receiving HMRF services into nFORM 2.0 if the local evaluation will involve analyzing nFORM survey data for those clients.

¹ Although it is rare, control groups for HMRF local evaluations could be based on administrative data or a control group from a partner agency. In these cases, the grantee should consult with its ETAP and FPS about whether to track the control group in nFORM 2.0.

Grantees conducting local evaluations may assign clients to different types of service assignments (also sometimes called research or intervention groups) to help distinguish clients who have consented to participate in the evaluation from those who have not. Service assignments also help grantees track the progress of clients who receive different levels of group-based or individual services through their participation in the local evaluation. Grantees that conduct impact evaluations most commonly use service assignments, although grantees conducting descriptive evaluations may also track clients by distinct service assignments if that is part of their local evaluation plan.

nFORM 2.0 allows grantees to establish as many service assignments as needed to support their local evaluation, within the five service assignment categories specified in Table 1. Within each of these categories, grantees can establish multiple service assignment groups. For example, a grantee can create two different treatment groups, with distinct names, for clients receiving different types of workshops. Module III.C of the [nFORM 2.0 User Manual](#) describes how grantees can set up service assignments to reflect their grantee’s specific treatment, control, and waitlist control groups. *Grantees should consult with their ETAP and FPS on which service assignments to establish in nFORM 2.0 based on their approved plans for impact and descriptive local evaluations.*

As described in Module V.A of the [nFORM 2.0 User Manual](#), grantees must save the service assignment for a client in nFORM 2.0 to complete the enrollment process for clients participating in a local evaluation. Only one service assignment can be selected when enrolling a client. Grantees should save a client’s service assignment after the client has completed the Applicant Characteristics Survey.

Table 1. nFORM 2.0 service assignments

nFORM 2.0 Service assignment category	Description	Quarterly Performance Progress Report (QPR) and Performance Progress Report (PPR)
Treatment	Create a Treatment service assignment for clients who are participating in the evaluation and receiving program services. All clients in a Treatment group will be receiving HMRF-funded services, which the grantee must record in nFORM 2.0. Create separate Treatment service assignments if your evaluation will assess different types or levels of services.	The QPR/PPR calculations include clients in Treatment groups and the services they receive.
Control (NO Services Provided)	Create a Control (NO Services Provided) service assignment for clients who are participating in the evaluation but not receiving any program services. nFORM 2.0’s Service History and Workshops/Sessions tabs will not appear for clients assigned to Control (NO Services Provided) groups because they are not eligible to receive services.	The QPR/PPR calculations do not include these clients, but grantees are encouraged to provide updates on their Control (NO Services Provided) groups in the qualitative narrative that accompanies the QPR/PPR.

nFORM 2.0 Service assignment category	Description	Quarterly Performance Progress Report (QPR) and Performance Progress Report (PPR)
Control (With Services)	Create a Control (With Services) service assignment for clients who are in a control group and who receive only limited program services. Like with treatment group clients, grantees must document any HMRF-funded services received by clients in Control (With Services) groups in nFORM 2.0 on the client's Service History and Workshops/Sessions tabs.	The QPR and PPR calculations include these clients and the services they receive. However, in the qualitative narrative that accompanies the QPR/PPR, grantees should state the counts of Treatment, Control (With Services), and Control Waitlist (With Services) clients served, to distinguish between how many clients were eligible to receive full services and how many were eligible for only some services.
Control Waitlist (NO Services Provided)	Create a Control Waitlist (NO Services Provided) service assignment for clients who are assigned to a control group and will not receive program services during the study, but may eventually be offered program services at the end of the study. Like the Control (NO Services Provided) group, nFORM 2.0's Service History and Workshops/Sessions tabs will not appear for clients assigned to a Control Waitlist (NO Services Provided) group because they are not eligible to receive services.	The QPR/PPR calculations do not include these clients, but grantees are encouraged to provide updates on their Control Waitlist (NO Services Provided) groups in the qualitative narrative that accompanies the QPR/PPR. In the narrative, grantees should also describe when and how many clients are reassigned from a control waitlist group to other groups, to help distinguish that their pattern of service receipt and potentially their outcomes might differ from other clients.
Control Waitlist (With Services)	Create a Control Waitlist (With Services) service assignment for clients who are assigned to a control group and will receive only limited services during the study, but may eventually be offered additional program services at the end of the study. Like the Control (With Services) service assignment, grantees must document any HMRF-funded services received by clients in Control Waitlist (With Services) groups in nFORM 2.0 on the client's Service History and Workshops/Sessions tabs.	The QPR and PPR calculations include these clients and the services they receive. However, in the qualitative narrative that accompanies the QPR/PPR, grantees should state the counts of Treatment, Control (With Services), and Control Waitlist (With Services) served, to distinguish between how many clients were eligible to receive full services and how many were eligible for only some services. In the narrative, grantees should also describe when and how many clients are reassigned from a control waitlist group to other groups, to help distinguish that their pattern of service receipt and potentially their outcomes might differ from other clients. As described in Table 3 below, clients in the Control Waitlist (With Services) group may have the longest span between entrance and exit survey of any research group, so it is useful to separately track how their experiences differ from other groups.

Should we assign clients to service assignments during the startup period for impact evaluations?

Grantees conducting impact evaluations should not enroll clients into their evaluation during the evaluation startup period. Clients served during the startup period should still be added to nFORM 2.0 to track their participation, but the check box in the nFORM application form to identify clients as participating in a local evaluation should not be checked. (See Module V.A of the [nFORM 2.0 User Manual](#) for information on the enrollment process.) Clients enrolled during the evaluation startup period are not eligible for the impact evaluation and their data should not be analyzed as part of the impact evaluation. *Grantees should consult with their ETAP and FPS to discuss when enrollment into their impact evaluations should begin. Grantees must receive approval from their FPS to begin impact study enrollment. Grantees should also refer to the information about early start and readiness criteria that the ETAP teams provided to grantees.*

How can we monitor clients by service assignment in nFORM 2.0?

The Local Evaluation Enrollment Operational Report in nFORM 2.0 enables grantees to view counts of clients enrolled in each service assignment category that the grantee has established for its local evaluation in total and by grantee location. Grantees can open the report in Microsoft Excel to analyze the progress of their evaluation. A second tab of the report provides details for each client enrolled in the grantee's local evaluation; this tab shows the service assignment for each client, their grantee location (if applicable), and their enrollment date. The report identifies clients by their client ID and couple ID (if applicable) and grantees can use the client ID and couple ID to link to data from other operational reports. Grantees can filter this report to include only those clients enrolled during a specific period of time or all clients enrolled throughout the entire grant—this makes it a useful tool to track enrollment across service groups.

The Query Tool enables grantees to view counts of applicants by service assignment, as well as select applicant characteristics—based on responses to the Applicant Characteristics Survey—by service assignment.

The Data Export includes all of a grantee's data from nFORM 2.0, except for clients' personally identifiable information. Importantly for local evaluations, the client service assignment is a separate variable in the data export for each client. With pivot tables or other analytic tools, grantees can use the data export to analyze client data on individual services received, survey responses, and workshop participation by service assignment.

See Module VIII of the [nFORM 2.0 User Manual](#) for instructions on how to use the data tools and reports in nFORM 2.0.

How do we reassign clients in waitlist control groups so they can receive services after the study ends?

After clients in a Control Waitlist group conclude their participation in the local evaluation, they may become eligible for program services; this applies to clients in both Control Waitlist (NO Services Provided) and Control Waitlist (With Services) groups. Control waitlist group members should receive full program services only after their contribution to the local evaluation is complete, including providing follow-up data. The evaluation should not use data collected from these clients after they exit the waitlist.

Grantees and local evaluators must consult with their ETAP and FPS on whether and, if so, when they can reassign clients in control waitlist groups to other groups.

At the direction of the local evaluator, the site administrator changes the client's Service Assignment on the Edit Program Information page (screen C8) in nFORM 2.0. The site administrator can change the service assignment to the Treatment group if the client will receive the Treatment services or to a Control (With Services) group if applicable. At this point, clients will be counted as part of their newly assigned group on the QPR/PPR and other nFORM 2.0-generated reports. In addition, the Service History and Workshops/Sessions tabs will now appear in the client profiles in nFORM 2.0 for clients reassigned from Control Waitlist (NO Services Provided) groups. Please review Module V.D.2 of the [nFORM 2.0 User Manual](#) for more information about the process of changing service assignments.

As noted in Table 1, the QPR/PPR reports on clients in Control Waitlist (With Services) groups and the services they receive, but not on clients in Control Waitlist (NO Services Provided) groups. When clients are reassigned from Control Waitlist groups to new groups in which they might be eligible for expanded services, their pattern of service receipt could change. In the QPR/PPR narrative, grantees should state the total number and percentage of Control Waitlist clients reassigned to a new service assignment, to distinguish that their pattern of service receipt and potentially their outcomes might differ from other clients.

Can I use survey data from nFORM 2.0 in my local evaluation?

As noted before, grantees must use nFORM 2.0 to collect and report on HMRP performance measures for all clients who receive grant-funded services, regardless of their participation in a local evaluation or their service assignment. *Grantees can use the data they collect in nFORM 2.0 for their local evaluations, but should consult with their ETAP and FPS to ensure the performance measures and ACF's recommended data collection approaches align with their evaluation plans.*

Grantees must use nFORM 2.0 to administer three performance measures surveys to clients: the Applicant Characteristics, Entrance, and Exit Surveys. The Applicant Characteristics Survey collects information such as the client's demographic characteristics, financial status, and family status. The Entrance and Exit Surveys ask clients questions from five outcome domains: (1) parenting, co-parenting, and fatherhood; (2) economic stability; (3) healthy marriage and relationships; (4) personal development; and (5) program perceptions. The content of the Entrance and Exit Surveys is tailored to each population (Table 2). Each of the surveys is available in English and Spanish; both English and Spanish versions of the surveys are available on the nFORM 2.0 [help page](#). Clients complete these surveys in nFORM 2.0 by reading each question in the web-based survey, or by selecting an audio option for the question to be read to them in English or Spanish. In rare circumstances and with FPS approval, clients may complete paper versions of the surveys. Please see the [Performance Measures and Data Collection Logistics Manual](#) for further information about survey administration best practices.

Although these surveys collect a broad range of client data, given nFORM 2.0's primary purpose as a performance management system, the surveys might not collect all variables of interest to a local evaluation.

Table 2. Client surveys, by client population

Client population	Survey
FRAMEWorks programs	
Adult individual	Adult entrance and exit survey
Adult couple	Adult entrance and exit survey
READY4Life programs	
Youth	Youth entrance and exit survey
Fatherhood FIRE programs	
Reentering individual	Reentering fathers entrance and exit survey
Community individual (father)	Community fathers entrance and exit survey
Community individual (mother)	Community mothers entrance and exit survey
Community couple (father)	Community fathers entrance and exit survey
Community couple (mother)	Community mothers entrance and exit survey

Grantees can access client survey and other data from nFORM 2.0 for their local evaluation by downloading a data export; Module VIII of the [nFORM 2.0 User Manual](#) describes the data export. Grantees can use the nFORM 2.0 Data Dictionary on nFORM 2.0’s [help page](#) to plan how they will use nFORM 2.0 data for their local evaluations. The data dictionary lists all of the nFORM 2.0 data variables included in the data export—these appear as “Field Names.” The data dictionary also specifies the values in the data export. For example, the data export shows a client’s population as a number 1 through 9 and the data dictionary indicates the population type associated with each number. Knowing the values will help in planning and interpreting analyses using nFORM 2.0 data.

When should we administer surveys in nFORM 2.0 to clients participating in our local evaluation?

When reviewing what performance measures data in nFORM 2.0 to use in local evaluations, grantees should also consult with their ETAP and FPS to make sure the *timing* for administering the surveys from nFORM 2.0 aligns with their local evaluation plans. Grantees should review the [nFORM 2.0 User Manual](#) and [Performance Measures and Data Collection Logistics Manual](#) for information about the Administration for Children & Families’ (ACF) timing requirements for the performance measures surveys.

Table 3 describes when grantees should typically administer each of the three nFORM 2.0 surveys to clients assigned to each service assignment category. This timing aligns with ACF’s requirements for performance measurement. Please note that surveys cannot be re-administered in nFORM 2.0 to a client to collect follow-up data after program completion, such as if evaluators plan on conducting follow-ups three or six months after programming ends. To conduct follow-up data collection, grantees can create their own data collection instruments which may include items from nFORM 2.0 surveys or project-specific questions. *Grantees should consult with their ETAP and FPS to confirm whether and how their local evaluation data collection processes might differ from performance measurement data collection best practices. The grantee’s FPS should approve any deviations for local evaluation purposes and note them in the grantee’s quarterly narrative that accompanies the QPR/PPR.*

Table 3. Timing of survey administration, by service assignment

Service assignment	Applicant Characteristics Survey	Entrance Survey	Exit Survey
Treatment	At intake, before random assignment	After random assignment, but before clients are advised of their service assignment (and ideally by a case manager who also does not know the client's service assignment)	At end of workshop programming, or 14 days after completing the Entrance Survey for shorter workshops
Control (NO Services Provided)	At intake, before random assignment	After random assignment, but before clients are advised of their service assignment (and ideally by a case manager who also does not know the client's service assignment)	At the same time Treatment clients take the Exit Survey
Control (With Services)	At intake, before random assignment	After random assignment, but before clients are advised of their service assignment (and ideally by a case manager who also does not know the client's service assignment)	At the same time Treatment clients take the Exit Survey
Control Waitlist (NO Services Provided)	At intake, before random assignment	At the beginning of the first workshop session the client attends after the client has finished the waiting period and been reassigned to another group.	At the end of the client's last workshop session after the client has finished the waiting period and been reassigned to another group
Control Waitlist (With Services)	At intake, before random assignment	After random assignment, but before clients are advised of their service assignment (and ideally by a case manager who also does not know the client's service assignment)	At the end of the client's last workshop session after the client has finished the waiting period and been reassigned to another group



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