



# RISK ASSESSMENT AND NEEDS-Q INTER-RATER RELIABILITY TOOLKIT

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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# MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## RISK ASSESSMENT AND NEEDS-Q

### INTER-RATER RELIABILITY TOOLKIT

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## Introduction

Starting in the Spring of 2017, the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) started to partner with the Facility and Community trainers to prepare the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) to test staff's reliability on scoring the Mississippi risk assessment and needs-q. CJI completed the first three inter-rater reliability activities and provided recommendations on how to improve the scoring practices of the risk assessment and needs-q. One of these recommendations is to regularly conduct inter-rater reliability activities to gauge scoring reliability and to drive risk assessment training. To accomplish this, CJI created this toolkit that provides a step-by-step process on how to conduct the inter-rater reliability activities.

## Preparation and Implementation of Activities

To properly prepare and implement the inter-rater reliability activities the following must be completed: develop a timeline for the inter-rater reliability activities, develop vignettes and master keys, draft and send communication about the inter-rater reliability activities, launch the activities for staff to participate, and track the participants while the activities are "live".

### *Inter-rater Activity Timeline*

The first step of an inter-rater reliability activity is the development of a timeline for the inter-rater reliability activities. This timeline is important to ensure all aspects of the process are completed. Figure 1, on page 4, provides a sample timeline. Here are a few helpful hints:

- When establishing the timeline, it is standard practice to conduct 3 activities during a given time period, and then to review the status of how well staff are using the tools.
- Once the results have been reviewed, it should be determined whether staff need additional training on how to score the tools and/or if more practice through additional inter-rater reliability activities is appropriate.
- When establishing the timeline, it is important to give staff at least a week between the date staff receive the Coaching Memo and the start date of the new activity.

Figure 1. Sample Timeline

Inter-Rater Reliability Work Plan			
Tasks	Responsible Party	Due Date	Status
Create three scenarios and answer keys for each of the risk levels: low risk, moderate or moderate-high risk, and high risk individual		Due 6 weeks prior to the launch of the first activity	
Review of scenarios and answer keys by another trainer and create master keys		Due 3 weeks prior to the launch of the first activity	
Create the 3 activities in SurveyMonkey®		Due 2 weeks prior to the launch of the first activity	
Upload a contact list for all staff trained on the risk assessment to SurveyMonkey®		Due 2 weeks prior to the launch of the first activity	
Launch the exercise (the survey will be "live" for participating staff)		CHOSEN DATE	
Send reminder emails		3 days after launch date, 1 week after launch date, and the day the activity closes	
Close exercise		CHOSEN DATE*	
Analyze Data from survey		3 days after Close Date	
Draft the Coaching Memo		5 days after analysis of data	
Receive leadership approval for the Coaching Memo		5 days after drafting the Coaching Memo	
Send the Coaching Memo to all staff and administrators		1 day after the Coaching Memo is approved by state leadership	

\*The exercise typically closes 2 weeks after launching it (unless there are extenuating circumstances)

### *Vignette and Master Key Development*

The second step to inter-rater reliability assessment is developing a library of vignettes and master keys to use for future inter-rater reliability activities. Vignettes are fictional scenarios that depict information that may be obtained in an interview with an individual. The vignettes also include information that would be used to aid in the completion of the risk assessment and needs-q (e.g., current supervision information, current age at supervision start, criminal history, institutional violations, gang involvement, and social history). While developing vignettes, master keys will also be created. Follow the steps below to develop a vignette and master key:

1. Prior to drafting the vignette, the writer should:
  - a. Open a copy of the risk assessment and needs-q forms. This should be a guide on what to include in the vignette as each question will need to be answered throughout the story; and

- b. Determine if the individual is going to be low, moderate, or high risk. This will drive what information is included in the scenario.
2. Draft the two parts of the vignette: the current supervision information (including the current offense, sentence, the current age at supervision, the individual's criminal history, and the individual's gang involvement); and the individual's social history (which includes answers to the needs-q).
  - a. The first part of the vignette should be the individual's name, the current case/charge (or for facility: current booking/intake information), current age at supervision/booking, a criminal history section, any institutional or probation violations, and gang involvement. An example is below:

MDOC Risk Assessment Training Facility Scoring Activity	
<b>CURRENT BOOKING/INTAKE INFORMATION:</b>	
[REDACTED] has been convicted of possession of marijuana (misdemeanor) and aggravated assault (felony). Mr. Green was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Mr. Green was ordered to complete Anger Management, Residential Drug Treatment, pay restitution and pay court costs.	
<b>CURRENT AGE AT BOOKING:</b> [REDACTED]	
<b>CRIMINAL HISTORY</b>	
<u>Adult Record</u>	
[REDACTED]	County Police Department; Possession of Marijuana (Misdemeanor); 12 months probation with MDOC.
[REDACTED]	Police Department; Aggravated Assault (Felony) Conviction; 5 years' incarceration with MDOC.
<b>INSTITUTIONAL VIOLATIONS</b>	
[REDACTED]	Violation for assaulting another offender in MDOC.
<b>GANG INVOLVEMENT</b>	
Mr. Green is not affiliated with a gang.	
<b>SOCIAL HISTORY</b>	

\* If you determine the individual will not have a criminal history or any institutional/probation violations, or any gang involvement, write "No Criminal History", or "No Institutional/Probation Violations" or "No Gang Involvement" under the title.

- b. The second part should be the individual's social history (the main scenario). The scenario should tell the story of the individual in the individual's voice and include the following information:

Category	Information Included in the needs-q that Should Be Included in Vignette
Employment/Education	Current employment status, Education status (e.g. Did they complete high school; Did they drop out of school and at what grade?; If they dropped out of school did they go on to receive a GED?)
Substance Abuse	Past and present alcohol and drug use and any consequences that may have occurred because of the use
Attitudes	The individual's attitude towards prosocial and antisocial behavior; how the court and police treated them; towards their sentence; and their general attitude toward their case.
Relationships	Whether the individual has consistent friends and their friend's influence (prosocial, antisocial, or gang member); Have any family or friends been in trouble with the law; How often do they see/interact with their family and friends; The type of relationship the individual has for
Personality	The individual's ability to cope with stress, difficult situations, anger management, and overall thinking towards prosocial coping mechanisms. Look at the way the individual responds to situations (e.g. do they lose attention easily; do they react without thinking; do they think people ask for problems).

\*For an example of a scenario, please see Appendix A.

3. Add supporting information into the scenario in areas staff struggled to answer in previous inter-rater reliability activities. This information can be found in previous Coaching Memos.
  - a. Review the most recent Coaching Memo and observe the "Item by Item Performance" table. Include supporting information in the scenario for the items that less than 80% of staff achieved the correct answer in the previous activity.
4. Once a vignette is written, create a "key" by scoring both the risk assessment and needs-q with the vignette information. After scoring the vignette, the author should determine the risk level of the individual in the vignette, and ensure this matches the author's original risk level goal. Once this is complete, at least one other certified trainer must score the risk assessment and the needs-q to ensure the accuracy of the score.
  - a. When feedback is provided by the trainer who reviews the score, there may be additional information that needs to be added or clarified in the vignette to ensure staff have enough information to score the tools. Adjust the text accordingly and ensure the answers to the entire activity are still accurate with the additions.
  - b. Once the information is clarified, both trainers should score the activity a final time to ensure they both have the same answers. When this is achieved, the final key will be the "master key" that can be saved for future use.

## Communications

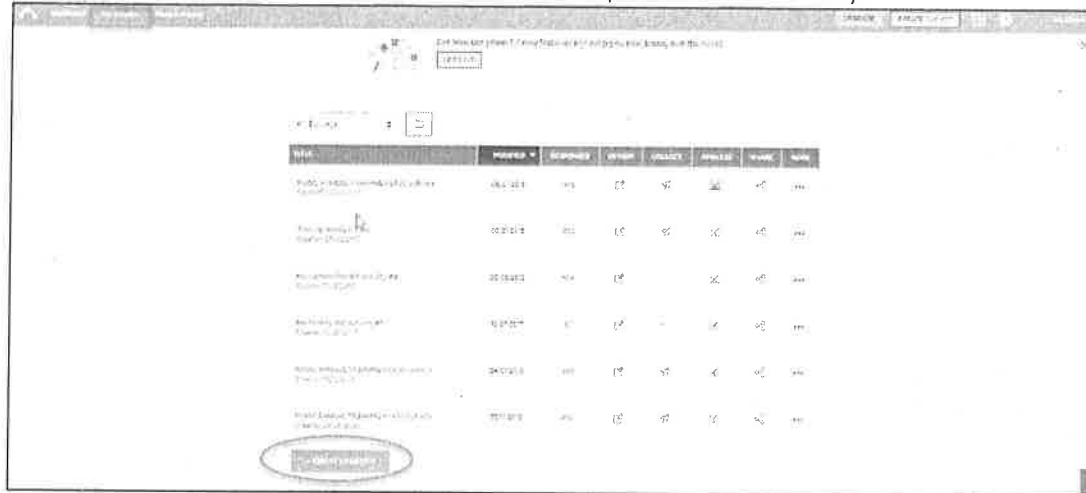
There are several communications that take place during the inter-rater reliability assessment process including initial emails, reminder emails, and Coaching Memo emails. Below is a description of each communication and examples can be found in Appendix B.

- **Introductory Memo:** The introductory memo is important to send to staff who will be participating in the inter-rater reliability activities. The memo should include the purpose of the inter-rater reliability activities, the process by which the activities will be conducted, and the dates the activities will be taking place. This memo should be sent out before the start of each set of the 3 activities to provide staff a reminder of why this process is important.
- **Initial Email from SurveyMonkey®:** The initial email should give staff participating in the inter-rater reliability activity instructions for how to take the survey and when to complete it.
- **Reminder Emails:** Reminder emails are a great way to ensure the initial email does not get buried in people's inboxes. The reminder emails should include the same information from the initial email, including the due date.
  - At least 3 reminder emails should go out to participants.
  - Supervisors should also reach out to staff who have not participated after the second reminder to ensure they complete the activity.
  - The final reminder email should encourage staff to participate by stating the number of staff that have participated.
- **Coaching Memo Emails:** The Coaching Memo Emails provide a summary of staff performance. This email should:
  - Contain the Coaching Memo (see the Coaching Memo section in the toolkit) as an attachment; and
  - A contact person for staff who may have questions on the results.

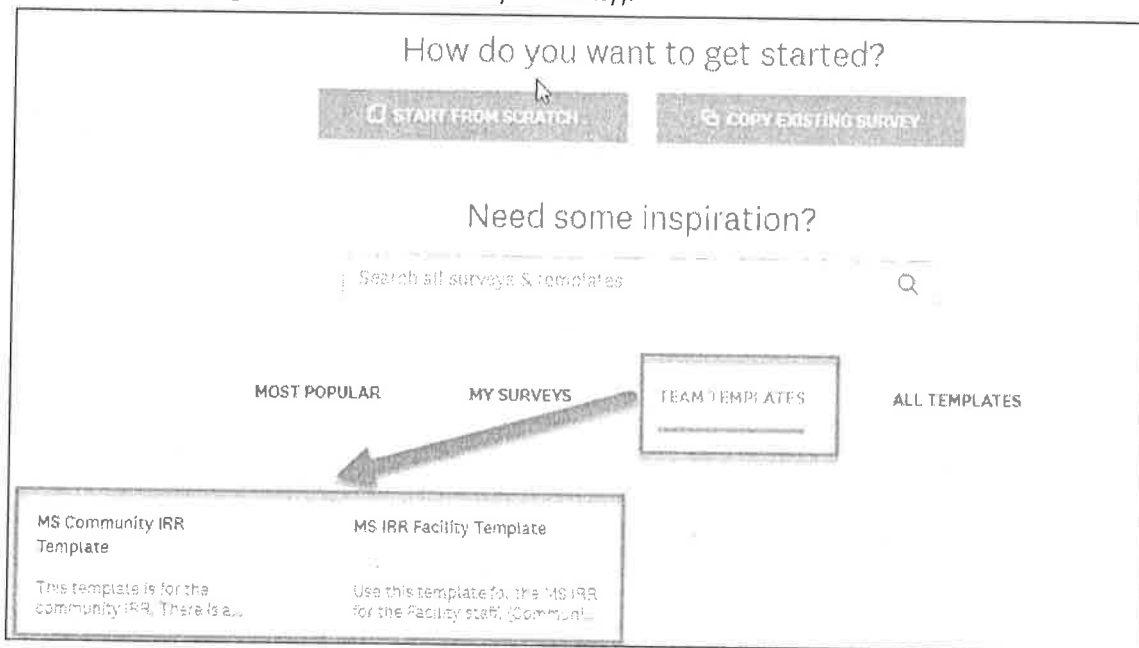
### *Creating the Activities in SurveyMonkey®*

To create an activity in SurveyMonkey®, use the following steps.

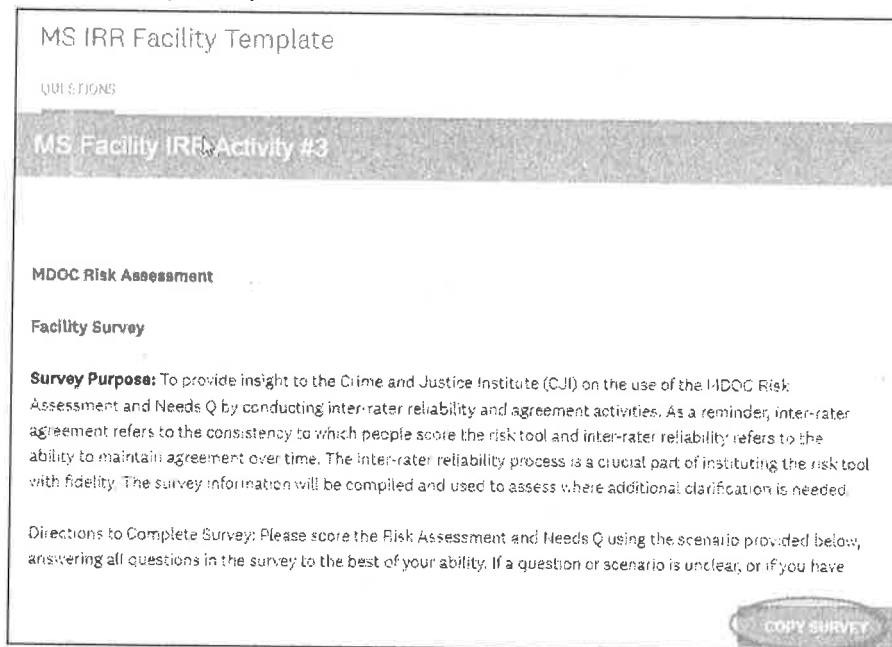
1. Click "My Surveys", and under the table of surveys click "Create Survey."



- Click "Team Templates" and select which template (this will be determined by whether the activity is being created for community or facility).



- Click "Copy Survey."





- Once in the survey, the survey will open to the "Design Survey". Click the title to edit. (The title should be the number of the inter-rater reliability activity.) Once the title is updated, click "Save."




P1


Page Logic More Actions

Survey Title  

MS Facility IRR Activity #3

You're good up to 250 characters

Alignment  Left Aligned

Category  Other

CANCEL SAVE

- Click "Edit" to edit the introduction. The due date in the instructions will need to be updated. Click "save" when finished with the edits.

LOGO

MS Facility IRR Activity #3

PAGE TITLE

MDOC Risk Assessment

Facility Survey

EDIT OPTIONS MOVE COPY DELETE

EDIT OPTIONS MOVE COPY

Text

MDOC Risk Assessment

Facility Survey

Survey Purpose: To provide insight to the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) on the use of the MDOC Risk Assessment and Needs Q by conducting inter-rater reliability and agreement activities. As a reminder, inter-rater agreement refers to the consistency to which people score the risk tool and inter-rater reliability refers to the ability to maintain agreement over time. The inter-rater reliability process is a crucial part of instituting the risk tool with fidelity. The survey information will be compiled and used to assess where additional clarification is needed.

Directions to Complete Survey: Please score the Risk Assessment and Needs Q using the scenario provided below, answering all questions in the survey to the best of your ability. If a question or scenario is unclear, or if you have any other concern related to a given question, please explain in the comment box.

Please complete the survey by 5pm on Tuesday, December 5th.

Insert text from...

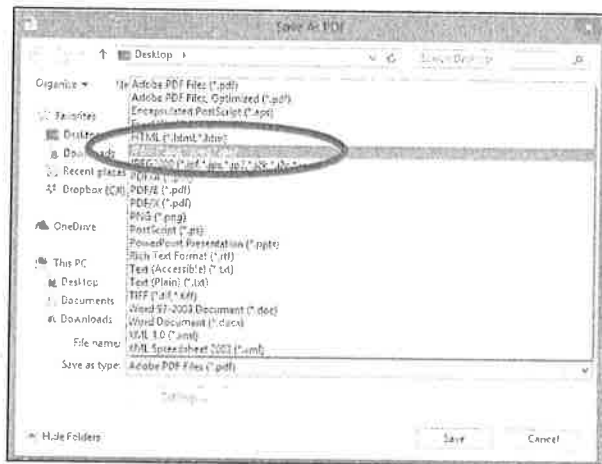
Nickname

Provide an alternative name for internal use.

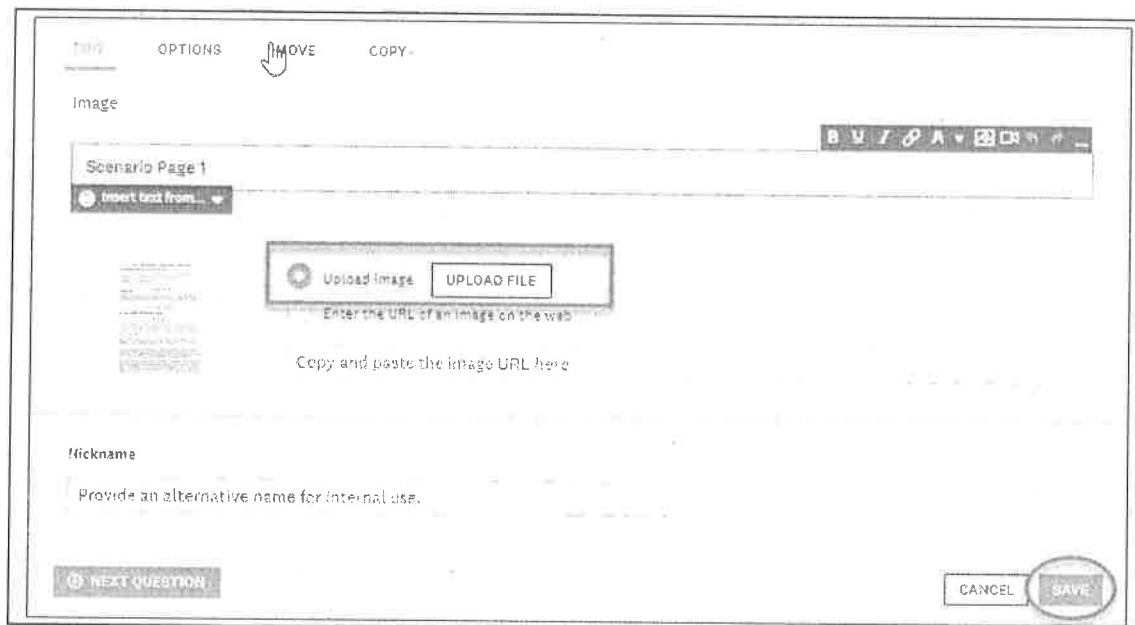
NEXT QUESTION

CANCEL SAVE

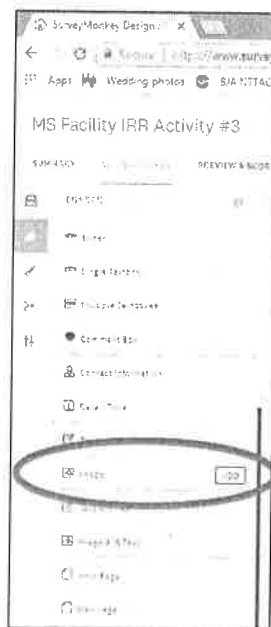
6. To upload the scenario to the survey, the document will need to be saved as a PDF. Once the scenario is created in word, save the word document also as a PDF. Once the PDF is created, the pages will need be saved as pictures to be uploaded here. To do this:
  - a. Open the PDF.
  - b. Click File → Save As
  - c. When saving the file, choose “JPEG” as the file type.
  - d. Each page of the scenario will be saved as its own JPEG picture.



7. Once the scenario has been saved as a JPEG, Click into the “Scenario Page 1”. This is where the new scenario will need to be uploaded. Click Upload file, and choose the first page of the scenario. Then click “Save.”



8. Repeat step 7 for the second page of the scenario, uploading page 2. If there is more than two pages, after the second page is saved, on the left side bar, select "Image."



9. Click "Add" and the new box to add an image will appear under the "Scenario 2<sup>nd</sup> Page." Follow the instructions from step 7 to upload the third page (and subsequent) pages of the scenario.
10. The rest of the survey will be ready to go. If there is a need to edit or changed the items on the risk assessment or needs-q, simply click on the question and update the items. The questions are set-up by domain.

### *Launching the Activities*

Once the activity is created in SurveyMonkey®, the activities must go "live" for participants to score the risk assessment and the needs-q on a vignette. Coordination of who is responsible for dissemination (for both Facility and Community activities) must be determined. The timeline provides the dates of when the survey should be "live". Follow the steps below to send the email from SurveyMonkey®.

1. Click "Collect Responses".



2. The screen below will appear. Select "Send by Email."

How would you like to collect responses to your survey?

☒ **Send by Email**  
Create custom email invitations and track who responds. Send follow up reminders to those who haven't responded.

 **Get Web Link**  
Share a web link via email, on your website, or post to social media. You can also schedule a recurring web link.

 **Buy Responses**  
Get real-time feedback from our panel of global respondents. See results in minutes.

3. Select the option to upload contacts. If a group has previously been saved to the SurveyMonkey® contact that option can be selected. The group names will appear at the bottom. Once a selection has been made, click "Add."

Add Recipients

Add from the following:

 CSV File

 Gmail

 Yahoo! Mail

 Outlook.com

 Office 365

 LinkedIn

 **Contacts**

 Manual

Choose a group

Choose a group

☐ MS\_IRR\_2.0

☐ MS\_IRR\_2.0

☐ MS\_IRR\_TEST

☐ MS\_Community\_IRR

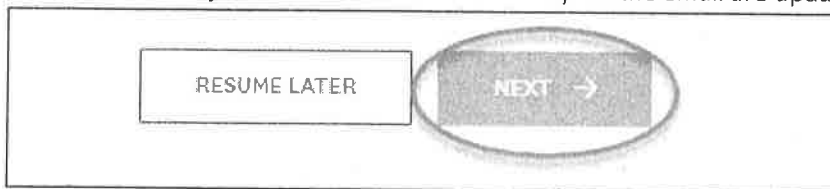
4. Next, Change the Subject for the email, and edit the body of the email. To edit the body of the email click "Edit Message."

The screenshot shows the SurveyMonkey email editor. At the top, the 'SUBJECT' field contains 'We want your opinion'. Below it, the 'MESSAGE' field is active, showing a preview of the email content. The preview includes a header 'MS Facility IRR Activity #4', a message body 'We're conducting a survey and your input would be appreciated. Click the button below to start the survey. Thank you for your participation!', a 'Begin Survey' button, and a footer with 'By using SurveyMonkey, you agree to our Anti Spam Policy' and a 'RESUME LATER' button. An 'EDIT MESSAGE' button is circled in the top right corner of the message field.

5. Once the "Header" and the SurveyMonkey® email (See Appendix B) are pasted into the body of the email, click "Save."

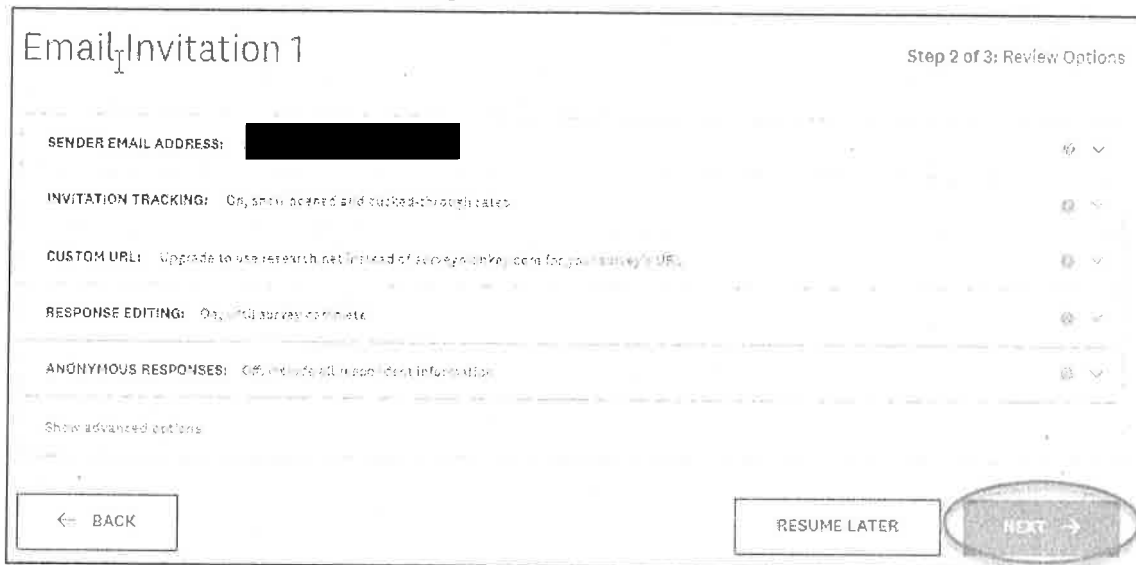
The screenshot shows the 'BODY' section of the email editor. The 'HEADER' section above it contains 'MS Facility IRR Activity #4'. The 'BODY' section has a text area with the message 'We're conducting a survey and your input would be appreciated. Click the button below to start the survey. Thank you for your participation!'. Below the text area, there is a 'Button' section with a 'Begin Survey' button. At the bottom, there is a 'PLATINUM FEATURE: Upgrade to hide SurveyMonkey branding.' message and a 'SAVE' button circled in red.

6. Once the "Subject" of the email and the "Body" of the email are updated, click "Next."



A screenshot of a web interface showing two buttons: "RESUME LATER" and "NEXT →". The "NEXT →" button is highlighted with a red oval.

7. The next page will require no changes, click "Next."



A screenshot of the "Email Invitation 1" configuration page, Step 2 of 3: Review Options. The page shows various settings for the email invitation, including SENDER EMAIL ADDRESS, INVITATION TRACKING, CUSTOM URL, RESPONSE EDITING, and ANONYMOUS RESPONSES. At the bottom, there are buttons for "← BACK", "RESUME LATER", and "NEXT →". The "NEXT →" button is highlighted with a red oval.

8. Choose when the survey will be sent. If the survey is set to be sent out right away select that option. Otherwise, select "Schedule Email" and set the date and time to have the email sent. Then click "Send" or "Send Now" (depending on the selection).

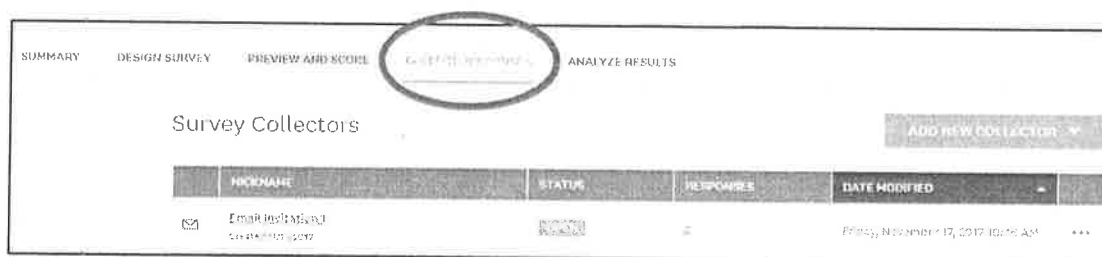


A screenshot of the "Email Invitation 1" configuration page, Step 3 of 3: Schedule. The page shows options to "Send now" or "Schedule a later date and time to send". Below this is a "Summary" section with a list of survey settings. At the bottom, there are buttons for "← BACK", "RESUME LATER", "TEST EMAIL", and "SEND NOW". The "SEND NOW" button is highlighted with a red oval.

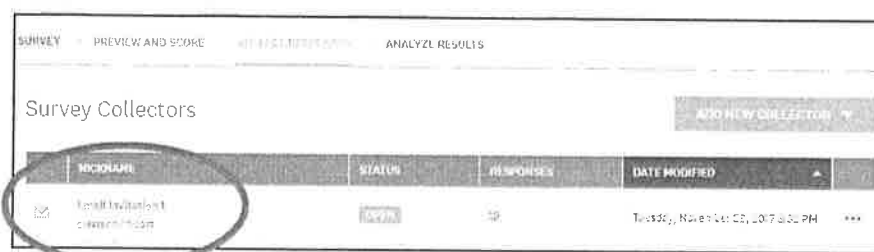
## Participant Tracking

Determine who will track the response rates and who is and is not participating in the activity. Participant tracking should be used to record who has received the initial link to the survey, to check who needs a reminder prior to the close of the activity, and to take a final count of how many staff participated in the survey once the activity has closed.

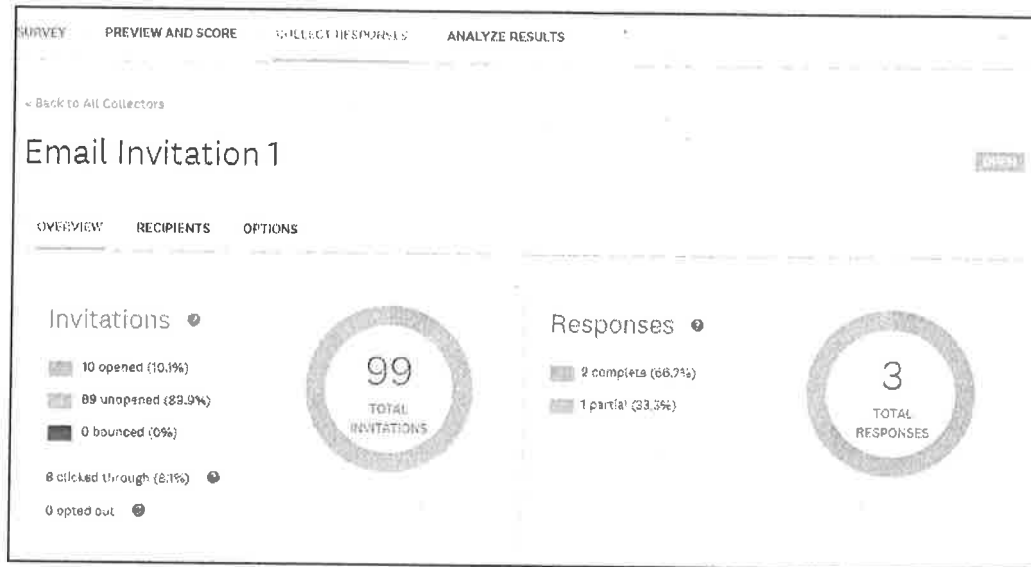
1. SurveyMonkey® makes the above steps very easy! There is a separate section that records distribution and response information.
  - a. To access this information after the survey has been distributed:
    - i. Log in and open the survey that needs to be checked.
    - ii. Click on "Collect Responses" from the top menu.



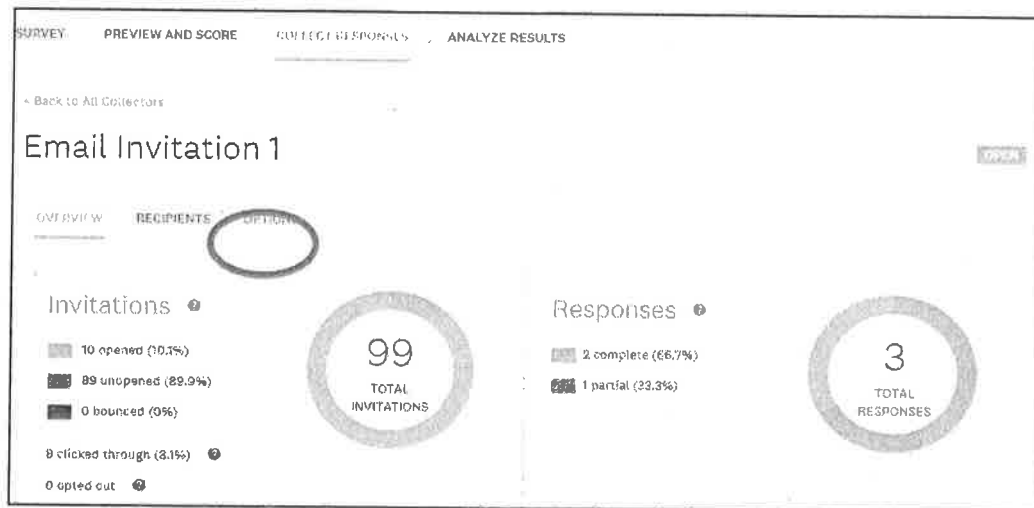
- iii. The first screen will show the emails that have been sent. Click on the name of the email you would like to see.



- iv. The second screen will show simple response data on who has received the email invitation and the number of responses that have been collected.



- v. Click the “Recipients” tab to obtain more information about the recipients including who has opened the survey and who has not.



- vi. Once you select “Recipients” the following screen below will appear. You can also export this information into a CSV file (which is a type of Excel document) to assist in creating lists of staff who have not participated. The file will be downloaded into your computer’s download folder.

OVERVIEW **RECIPIENTS** OPTIONS

ALL MESSAGES (1) ALL RECIPIENTS (1) EXPORT ALL (.CSV) Search recipients

EMAIL	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	SENT	RESPONDED	CUSTOM 1
amalanchook@crj.org			No	No	



## Analysis

Once the inter-rater activity survey has closed, analysis must occur to obtain information on how staff scored the activity. This includes exporting, cleaning, and analyzing data. CJI provided an excel template to help MDOC with analyzing the data. However, there are specific steps that must be completed to obtain the analysis.

### Exporting Data

1. In SurveyMonkey®, click the "Analyze Results" tab.



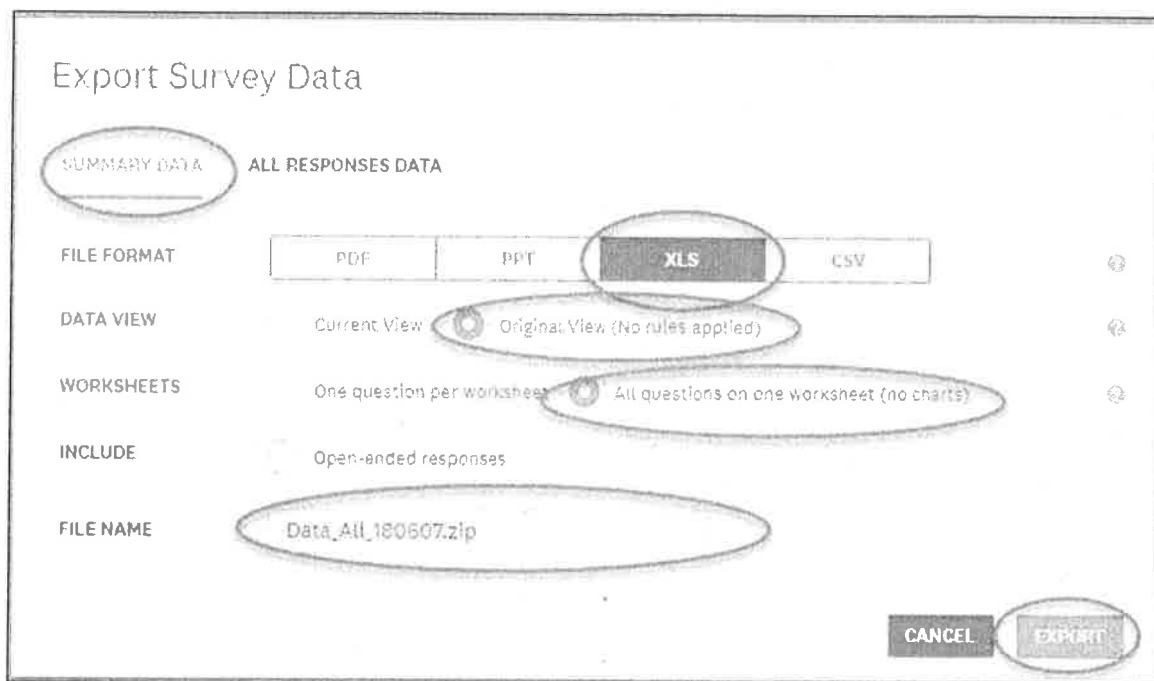
2. On the left side of the screen is the "Exports" section. Click "Export All".



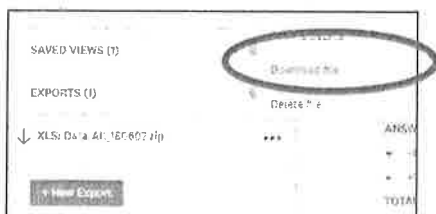
3. Select "All summary data".



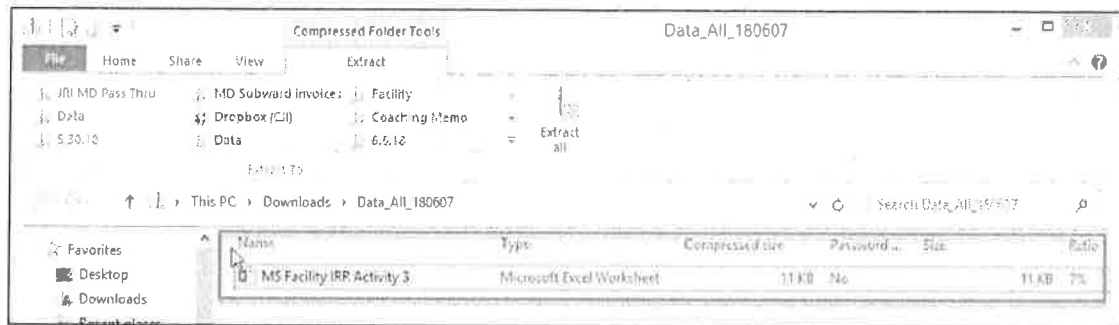
4. The Export Survey Data box will open.
  - a. Choose the "XLS" (Excel) option.
  - b. Select "Original View" under "Data View."
  - c. Select "All questions on one worksheet (no charts)" under "Worksheets."
  - d. The File Name can be changed if desired.
  - e. Click "Export" once these options are selected.



5. Once the export is finished being created, click the document, and click "Download."



- Once the file is downloaded, open the ZipFile, and open the excel document.



- All the percentages will be calculated for each item, and for each answer. There maybe a few answers that say "Skipped." This indicates there were people who did not complete the survey (as all questions in the activity are marked as required). This information will be used for the coaching memo.

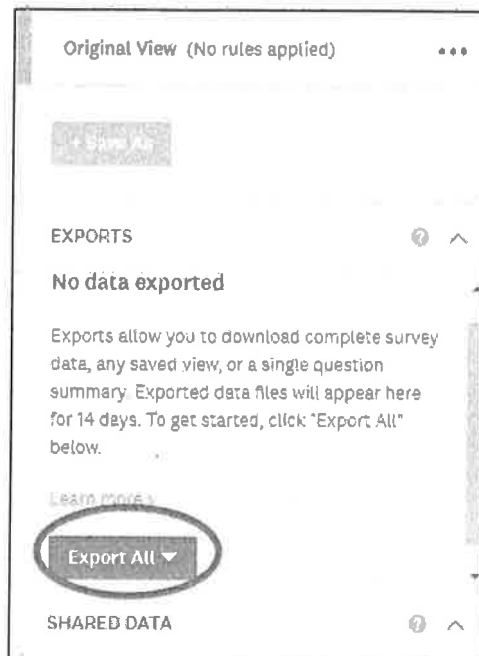
A	B	C	D	E
<b>MS Facility IRR Activity #3</b>				
<b>Q1. Age: Measured as age at intake into the DOC for current admission</b>				
Answer Choices		Responses		
+0 27 or older		10.53%	6	
+1 26 or younger		89.47%	51	
		<b>Answered</b>	<b>57</b>	
		<b>Skipped</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Q2. Gang Involvement: Measured as the offender having known gang involvement</b>				
Answer Choices		Responses		
+0 No gang involvement		0.00%	0	
+0 Self-reported gang involvement		17.54%	10	
+1 Gang Involved		82.46%	47	
		<b>Answered</b>	<b>57</b>	
		<b>Skipped</b>	<b>2</b>	

Next, the data file with all responses will need to be generated.

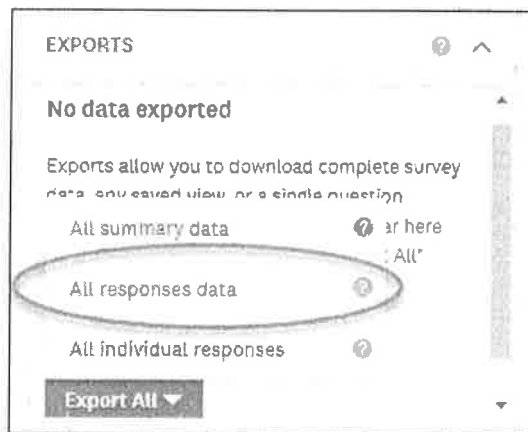
- In SurveyMonkey®, click the "Analyze Results" tab.



9. On the left side of the screen is the "Exports" section. Click "Export All".



10. Select "All summary data".



11. The Export Survey Data box will open.
- Choose the "XLS" (Excel) option.
  - Select "Original View" under "Data View."
  - Select "Condensed" under "Columns."
  - Select "Actual Answer Text" under "Cells."
  - Change the File Name, if desired.
  - Click "Export" once these options are selected.

## Export Survey Data

**SUMMARY DATA** ALL RESPONSES DATA

**FILE FORMAT** XLS XLS+ SPSS PDF

**DATA VIEW** Current View Original View (No rules applied)

**COLUMNS** Condensed

**CELLS** Actual Answer Text

**FILE NAME** Data\_All\_180608.zip

CANCEL EXPORT

12. Once the export is finished being created, click the three dots next to the document and click "Download file."

**SAVED VIEWS (1)**

**EXPORTS (1)**

↓ XLS: Data\_All\_180608.zip

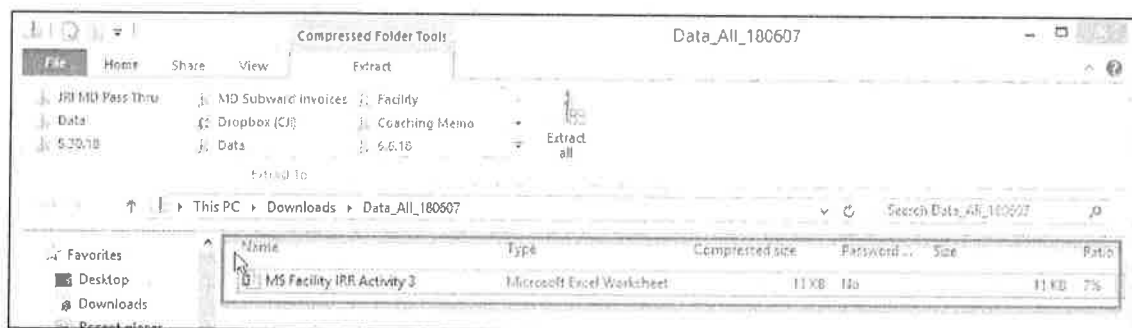
+ New Export

See file details  
Download file  
Delete file

...

### *Cleaning and Preparing the Data File*

1. Open the ZipFile, and open the Excel document.



2. Select all of Row 2 (by clicking on the 2). Right Click, and select "Delete".

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Respond	Collector	Start Date	End Date	IP Address	Email Address	First Name	Last Name	Custom	Age: Mean
2										Response
3	6.57E+09	1.67E+08	#####	#####						+1 26 or y
4	6.57E+09	1.67E+08	#####	#####						+1 26 or y
5	6.57E+09	1.67E+08	#####	#####						+1 26 or y
6	6.57E+09		#####	#####						+1 26 or y
7	6.57E+09		#####	#####						+1 26 or y
8	6.57E+09		#####	#####						+1 26 or y
9	6.57E+09		#####	#####						+1 26 or y
10	6.57E+09		#####	#####						+0 27 or ol
11	6.57E+09		#####	#####						+1 26 or y
12	6.56E+09		#####	#####						+1 26 or y

3. Select Columns A, B, C, D, and F (Click on the Column A and drag to the right to Column E to select all the columns). Right click, and select "Delete."

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	Respond	Collector	Start Date	End Date	IP Address	Email Address	First Name	Last Name	Custom	Age: Mean	Gang In
2	6.57E+09	1.67E+08	#####	#####							+1 26 or y
3	6.57E+09	1.67E+08	#####	#####							+1 26 or y

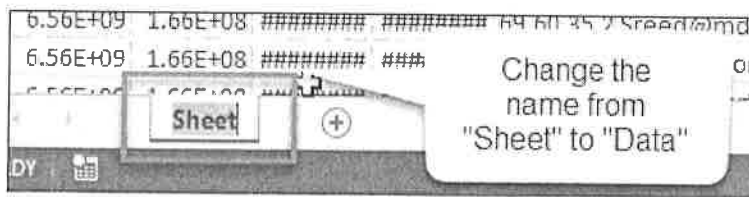
4. Select Columns B, C, and D. Right click, and select "Delete."

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Email Address	First Name	Last Name	Custom	Age: Mean
2					+1 26 or y
3					+1 26 or y
4	sheidra.arrington@mtctrains.com				+1 26 or y

5. Select Columns G through AT, as those rows will not be needed (the percentages are generated in the "Summary Data" excel document).

	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA
1	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
8	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No

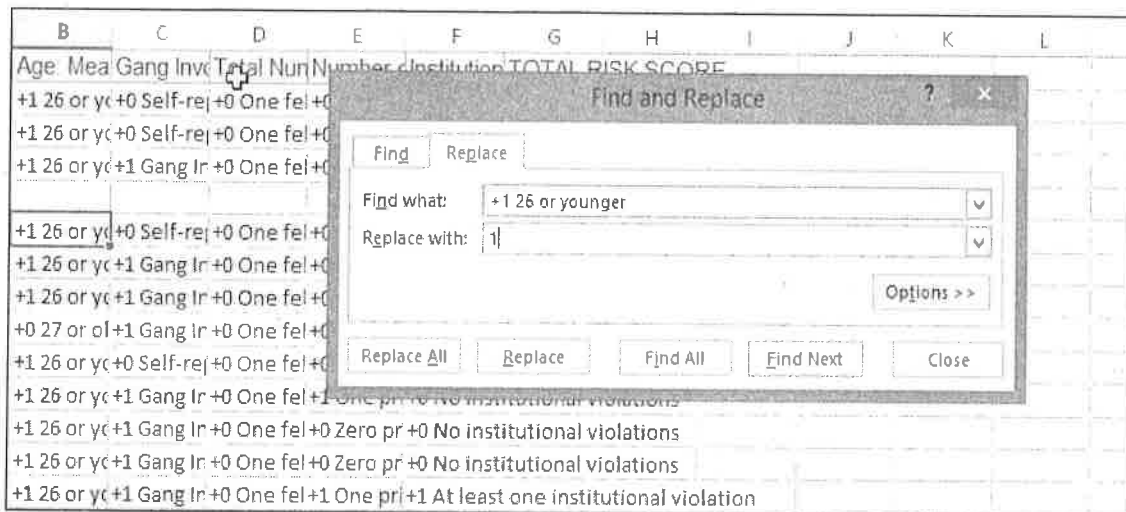
6. Now that Column G is empty, change the title of the Column in Row 1 to be "Total Risk Score."
7. Change the name of the sheet. To do this, double click on the tab that says "Sheet". It will highlight the name. Type in "Data". It is important to keep the name as "data" to ensure the formulas that will be used for the analysis will work.



8. The answers will need to be changed from text to numeric values to do this, use the table below (also see Appendix C). To do this, use the Find & Select function.



9. Using the Find and Replace Table provided (below and in Appendix C), copy and paste the text (so the wording is exactly as it is in the excel document) into the "Find What:" field. Find the corresponding "Replace with:" number and type that into the "Replace with:" box. (NOTE: there may be a few where the text is not found. This is okay, it simply means people did not select that answer.)



**Find What and Replace with Table:**

Find What:	Replace with:
+1 26 or younger	1
+0 27 or older	0
+0 No gang involvement	0
+0 Self-reported gang involvement	0
+1 Gang Involved	1
+0 One felony at booking	0
+1 Two felonies at booking	1
+2 Three or more felonies at booking	2
+0 Zero prior prison incarcerations	0
+0 Prior incarcerations from other jurisdiction (the offender does not have prior MDOC incarcerations but does have prior out of state, self-reported, or interstate compact incarcerations)	0
+1 One prior prison incarceration	1
+2 Two or more prison incarcerations	2
+0 No institutional violations	0
+1 At least one institutional violation	1

10. Once all the text has been changed to numeric, scroll through the document to determine all text has been changed. While checking the text, if there is a row there is no data, select the row and delete the row. See example:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Email Address	Age	Mea	Gang Inv	Total Nun	Number c	Institution
2							TOTAL RISK
3		1	0	0	0	0	
4		1	0	0	0	0	
5		1	1	0	0	0	
6		1	0	0	0	0	

11. In the Total Risk Score Column (Column G), click into the first cell (G2) and type in the following formula: **=Sum(B2:F2)** and hit "enter." A number is generated totaling the Total Risk Score for that individual.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	Email Address	Age	Mea	Gang Inv	Total Nun	Number c	Institution	Total Risk Score
		1	0	0			=SUM(B2:F2)	
		1	0	0	0	0		
		1	1	0	0	0		



12. Using the same cell, click the cell, the cell is squared with green, and the bottom right corner has a darker green box. Hover over the green box and when the + appears, click and drag to the last entry.

	F	G	H
ber cInstitution		TOTAL RISK SCORE	
0	0	1	
0	0		
0	0		
0	0		
0	0		
0	0		
0	0		
0	0		
1	0		
0	0		
0	0		
1	1		
0	1		
1	0		
0	0		
0	0		
0	0		
0	0		

13. Once the Total Risk Score is calculated, open the excel file “MS IRR Analysis Template” provided electronically with this toolkit. (**NOTE:** It will appear the formulas are not working, but this will be resolved in the next few steps.)

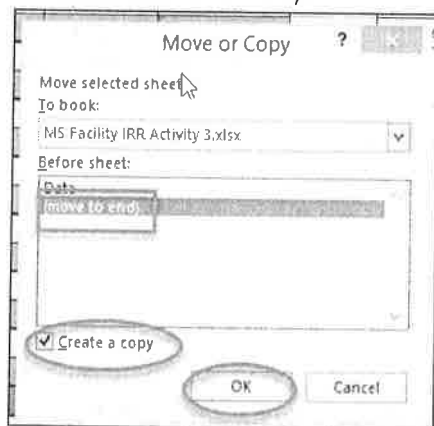
14. Right Click the tab name “Analysis” and select “Move or Copy.”



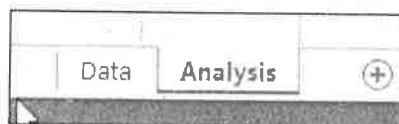
15. A dialogue box is displayed. Select the dropdown, and select the name of the workbook for the data.



16. Once the workbook is selected. Choose the “(move to end)” option, and the “Create a copy” check box. Click “Okay.”



17. Go into the workbook with the data, and the Analysis tab should appear.



18. In the Analysis Tab, the formulas for the “Total Risk Score” column (Column C) will need to be updated. To do this, click on C2 and type the formula =COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,0) then hit enter. This will calculate the number of people who had a total of ‘0’ as the Total Risk Score. Using the formulas below, update the cells C2, C4, C6, C8, C10, C12, C14, and C16 with the corresponding formulas (see table below). Once all the formulas are updated, the percentages will be automatically generated.

Cell Number	Formula
C2	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,0)
C4	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,1)
C6	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,2)
C8	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,3)
C10	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,4)
C12	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,5)
C14	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,6)
C16	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,7)

19. Once the Risk Assessment Score table has been updated, the Risk Level Table will need to be updated. The formulas for the “Total Number of People” column (Column F) will need to be updated. To do this, click on F2 and type the formula and hit enter.

=COUNTIF(Data!G:G,0)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,1)

This will calculate the number of people who achieved the Low Risk based on their Total Risk Score. Using the formulas below, update cells F2, F3, and F4. Once all the formulas are updated, the percentages will be automatically generated.

Cell Number	Formula
F2	=COUNTIF(Data!G:G,0)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,1)
F3	=COUNTIF(Data!G:G,2)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,3)
F4	=COUNTIF(Data!G:G,4)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,5)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,6)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,7)

20. Save the excel document with the Data and Analysis tabs as MS FACILITY/COMMUNITY IRR Activity #X. (**NOTE:** The highlighted sections will need to be updated according to which group of staff did the activity, and the #X should reflect the activity number)
21. Once the document is saved, the coaching memo can be created.

## Creating the Coaching Memo

Once the data is exported and cleaned, the information should be summarized for the Coaching Memo. An example of a full Coaching Memo is provided in Appendix D. The Coaching Memo should include five sections: Inter-rater Reliability Introduction, Risk Assessment Analysis and Recommendations, Domain Performance, Item by Item Performance, and Scoring Explanations for Items that Less than 80% of Respondents Scored Correctly.

### *Inter-Rater Reliability Introduction*

This section of the memo should include a narrative description of the purpose for MDOC to conduct the inter-rater reliability activities. This introduction should be used for each coaching memo to remind staff why the process is important, and to assist in explaining the 80% benchmark.

An example is provided below.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mississippi Inter-rater Reliability Scenario #3 Coaching Memo</b> <b>Facility</b> <b>January 16, 2018</b></p> <p>Quality assurance is an essential part of the implementation of a risk and needs assessment. A primary way to ensure quality implementation is through assessing inter-rater reliability, or the consistency with which staff score the risk assessment and Needs-Q. In other words, if several people score the tool when presented with the same information, do they get the same results and scores? The ultimate goal is consistency (or agreement) and accuracy over time; MDOC's goal is to maintain at least 80% agreement. Most organizations start with agreement levels closer to the 20-30% range, but with clarification, coaching, and additional training, do achieve the 80% benchmark.</p> <p>For the MDOC's inter-rater reliability activities, we look at how all respondents scored the risk assessment and Needs-Q. For the risk assessment, we want to know how many people achieved the correct risk score <u>and</u> the correct risk level. This is important because, although everyone may achieve the correct risk level, they may not achieve the correct risk score. The scores are important because they drive risk levels and impact the way people are supervised, <u>as</u> well as the development of their case plans. This is also true for the Needs-Q. We look at each item (question) on the Needs-Q to be sure everyone is answering the item (question) the same, and then we also look at how many people score every item within a domain correctly.</p> <p>In the sections below, you will find the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Risk assessment inter-rater results by item, or what percentage of respondents scored the items correctly;</li><li>▪ Needs-Q results by item, or the percent scoring each item correctly;</li><li>▪ Item-by-item feedback for questions where agreement is below 80%; and,</li><li>▪ Recommendations</li></ul> <p>This information is intended to inform MDOC whether clarification is needed on certain items, and where additional training or coaching may be needed.</p>
--

## *Risk Assessment Performance*

This section of the memo should use the statistics generated in the "Summary Data" exported into the excel document. Use the results from the document to fill in the percentage for the correct answers for each item on the risk assessment. Each answer for the risk assessment will need to be updated for each new scenario.

This section should also include the results of the correct risk level and risk score. Use the statistics generated in the XXX document.

An example is provided below.

### **Risk Assessment**

For the James Doe scenario, 95% of respondents (175 out of 184) achieved the correct risk level of High Risk, and 76% (139 out of 184) achieved the correct risk score of 6.

The bullet points below show the percentage of respondents who answered each of the risk assessment questions correctly. MDOC staff did an excellent job in achieving the 80% benchmark for all five items on the risk assessment:

- *Age:* 89% of respondents scored this item correctly. The correct answer was "0 Points = the offender is 27 years of age or older at start of supervision."
- *Gang Involvement:* 94% of respondents scored this item correctly. The correct answer was "1 point = gang involvement."
- *Total Number of Current Felonies:* 91% of respondents scored this item correctly. The correct answer was "2 points = three or more felonies at time of supervision start on current case."
- *Number of Prior Incarcerations:* 92% of respondents scored this item correctly. The correct answer was "2 points = two or more prior incarcerations."
- *Institutional Violations:* 90% of respondents scored this item correctly. The correct answer was "1 point = at least 1 institutional violation."

## *Risk Assessment Recommendations*

This section provides staff with feedback on how to improve the scoring of the risk assessment. This section should emphasize the importance of using the information provided in the scenario in the following sections: the current case/charge (or for facility: current booking/intake information); current age at supervision/booking; the criminal history section; the institutional/probation violations; and gang involvement. The feedback should also make mention of when staff are scoring the risk assessment for a real offender, most of the information is generated for them, and it is important they verify that the information is correct.

An example is provided below.

Recommendations:

- When scoring the risk assessment, it is important to look at the following sections of the scenario for information about the individual's past: Current Supervision Information, Criminal History, and Gang Involvement.
- When completing the risk assessment in situations with real clients, the age will be pre-populated with the individual's name and MDOC information. However, staff will need to fill in the Gang Involvement, Current Felonies, Prior Incarcerations, and Institutional Violations items.
  - To find this information, look at the individual's file for the background information.
  - It is important to remember the scoring definition for the current felonies item: "Only felony convictions for the current supervision should be counted. If there are multiple counts of the same crime (e.g. two counts of felony burglary), this counts as two felonies. Do not count prior felony convictions from previous cases. Do not count felonies for the current case that do not result in a conviction. To score this item, add the total number of all felonies in the current conviction."

### *Needs-Q Performance*

The second section of the Coaching Memo shows the performance of each item for the activity (i.e., the amount of staff that scored the item correctly). This shows what items need feedback for staff to improve scoring. It also identifies the questions which less than 80% of staff achieved the correct answer. These questions will be included in the next section of the Coaching Memo ("Scoring Explanations" section).

This section can be updated using the "Summary Data" exported into the excel document. Once the table is completed, recommendations can be written for the domains that have the most items under 80% agreement.

**Brief example of the table in the Coaching Memo:**

## Needs-Q

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents who answered each item (question) on the Needs-Q correctly. The results show that, item-by-item, staff met the 80% benchmark for half of the questions on the Needs-Q assessment.

**Table 1. Item-By-item analysis of the percent of respondents who scored the item correctly**

Employment/Education	% Correct
Are you currently unemployed or were you unemployed prior to incarceration?	80%
Have you ever been fired from a job?	96%
Have most of your jobs been for less than a year?	89%
Were you unable to graduate from high school or earn a GED?	88%
Were you ever suspended or expelled from school?	98%
Have you typically had poor relationships with job supervisors, fellow workers, teachers, and fellow students?	100%
Would your most recent job supervisor or most recent teacher say your work performance was poor or you had difficulty getting along with others?	98%

## Scoring Explanations for Items that Less than 80% Respondents Scored Correctly

This section of the Coaching Memo provides explanations of the answers for the needs-q that 80% of staff scored the answer correctly.

Any question that has a percentage less than 80% (as indicated by the "Item by Item Performance" table) should have an explanation on why the answer on the answer key is correct.

## Brief example of the table in the Coaching Memo:

Table 2 shows item-by-item feedback for those items where staff did not achieve the 80% benchmark. This information is provided to assist you in scoring these items correctly as you use the Needs-Q moving forward.

**Table 2. Item-by-item feedback on how to improve scoring for items that were below the 80% benchmark**

Domain	Item	Correct Answer	% Correct	Reason for Correct Answer
Substance Abuse	4- Have drugs or alcohol caused problems with the offender's jobs or school?	No	73%	Though Ms. Long reported having used marijuana every other day since age 16, there are no indications that it has caused interference with her job or school. The scoring guide states "This item refers to use within the past 12 months. Score this item 'Yes' if there are indicators that the offender has problems with school/work based on the offender's substance use AND/OR if the offender reports problems in this area related to his/her use." Therefore, this item should be marked 'No.'
	7- Has the offender ever participated in treatment for drugs or alcohol?	Yes	77%	Ms. Long stated her family sent her to an alcohol and drug treatment facility when she was 18. The scoring guide states "This item should be scored 'Yes' for both successful and unsuccessful completion of treatment." Therefore, this item should be marked 'Yes.'
	8- Does he/she believe drugs or alcohol are a current problem?	Yes	77%	Ms. Long stated "she believes she might have a meth problem, after her troubles with the law." Therefore, this item should be marked 'Yes.'
Attitude	1- Does the offender believe that most people get into trouble with the law?	No	79%	Ms. Long stated "being in trouble with the law is not common" and "it seems as if she gets in trouble more than most people." Therefore, this item should be marked 'No.'
	3- Does the offender believe the police and court treated him/her unfairly?	Yes	50%	The scoring guide states "The offender may express sentiments such as 'the police are out to get me' or the 'system is rigged,' in these and similar cases, this item should be scored 'Yes'." In Ms. Long's case, she stated "the police exaggerated her situation". Therefore, this item should be marked 'Yes.'

## Needs-Q Recommendations

This section of the memo should follow the needs-q performance for each item table. This section of the Coaching Memo is used to provide overall recommendations and general feedback to improve the needs-q scoring. This can include overall recommendations for each domain where there is a significant number of items within the domain that were scored incorrectly, but will not include specific information per item. Feedback on how to correct common scoring errors observed across several sections of the activity should be included here.

### Example:

#### Recommendations

Based on the results of the third inter-rater reliability activity, we've provided information and tips below to improve scoring in two of the domains: Relationships and Personality.

- **Relationships**
  - When scoring this section, it is important to remember the ultimate goal: To assist the offender in building strong relationships with individuals who are prosocial and are supportive of the offender adopting a prosocial lifestyle. This section looks at who the offender is associating with to determine what changes the offender needs to make to achieve this goal. If the offender does not have prosocial and supportive family and friends, and primarily has antisocial peers in his/her life, the offender will be at greater risk to recidivate.
  - This section should closely examine the activities that these people are engaged in, how much time the individual spends with them, and how much they influence his/her behavior.
- **Personality**
  - The purpose of this section is to identify any antisocial personality characteristics. This section should reflect overall patterns in an individual's personality and behavior rather than isolated incidents. In scoring these items, assessors should look for patterns of behavior across more than one area of life (e.g. family, friends, work/school, social life).
  - The scoring of the items in this section are based on the offender's self-report.
- **General Scoring Tips**
  - When scoring the scenarios, assessors should score based on the information provided; be careful not to make assumptions. When conducting the Needs-Q interview, assessors should be sure to ask enough questions to gather information to score each of the items on the assessment (this is one limitation of using these scenarios for scoring practice since we cannot get additional information to assist with scoring the way you would in a real interview situation).
  - If there is not enough information to score an item, it should be marked 'No.' However, in a real Needs-Q interview, staff should make every attempt to ask questions and gather enough information to answer each of the questions on



APPENDIX  
*Appendix A Example of Scenario*

**MDOC Risk Assessment Training  
Facility Scoring Activity**

**CURRENT BOOKING/INTAKE INFORMATION:**

[REDACTED] has been convicted of possession of marijuana (misdemeanor) and aggravated assault (felony). Mr. Green was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Mr. Green was ordered to complete Anger Management, Residential Drug Treatment, pay restitution and pay court costs.

**CURRENT AGE AT BOOKING:** [REDACTED]

**CRIMINAL HISTORY**

Adult Record

[REDACTED] County Police Department; Possession of Marijuana (Misdemeanor); 12 months probation with MDOC.

[REDACTED] Police Department; Aggravated Assault (Felony) Conviction; 5 years' incarceration with MDOC.

Juvenile Record

No juvenile records.

**INSTITUTIONAL VIOLATIONS**

[REDACTED] Violation for assaulting another offender in MDOC.

**GANG INVOLVEMENT**

Mr. Green is not affiliated with a gang.

**SOCIAL HISTORY**

[REDACTED] was not employed at the time of his arrest. Prior to his incarceration, he rarely worked and reported working two jobs in his life time. One job was at [REDACTED] and was for

three months and the other was at [REDACTED] for 10 months. He has always had issues with authority and change; whether it was with his schedule being changed, interacting with his co-workers and customers, or taking orders from his employer. He enjoyed being his own boss and making fast cash. On his breaks from work, [REDACTED] would sell marijuana in front of the gas station. His boss pulled him to the side on several occasions about this issue. [REDACTED] did not understand the big deal because he was just making a few bucks; he did not sample his product. He reports not enjoying the risk of drug dealing, but he has to make some fast cash in order to pay his bills. [REDACTED] would always blow his boss off, because of all people, his boss should understand the value of creating a business. [REDACTED] reported that he has been fired for fighting with a customer.

Before [REDACTED] experienced a life changing event, he was considered a good student and had no issues with accomplishing goals in school. He was very popular. Everybody loved him and enjoyed being around him. His grades would always out score the other students. [REDACTED] played sports and participated in every activity that was offered. The teachers considered him an ideal student. After his life changing event, [REDACTED] began to spiral downhill. He dropped out of school at the age of 17 and never went back to school. [REDACTED] reports no suspensions or expulsions at school. He hopes to obtain his GED while in prison.

[REDACTED] was considered a "mama's boy." They became very close when [REDACTED] biological father died in a car accident. No one in the family had been in trouble with the law. His mom raised him by herself for years until she married [REDACTED] stepfather. The stepfather was an alcoholic and very abusive. He would beat [REDACTED] mother on a daily basis, in front of him. [REDACTED] eventually, moved out of the house. When he would visit and he saw his stepfather hitting his mother, he would try to step in to protect her but the same would happen to him. This abuse went on for years without [REDACTED] mother filing charges because his stepfather was a police officer. She would tell [REDACTED], "No one is going to believe me over a Law Enforcement Officer." After about 5 years into the marriage, [REDACTED] stepfather was injured on the job. He could not be in the field and was confined to a desk. He was angry and took it out on [REDACTED] mother. He beat her until she was unconscious with internal damage and broken bones. She died as a result of the injuries. [REDACTED] whole world came crashing down. She was the only family that he had left. Not only was [REDACTED] crushed, but there were no consequences for his stepfather's actions.

[REDACTED] never drank because he didn't want to be like his stepdad. He tried marijuana twice but stayed away from it because he wanted to build his business. [REDACTED] reported no problems with drugs or alcohol and has not been to treatment.

[REDACTED] started his own family with his childhood friend. They were very young with two children (twins) and didn't have stable resources to provide for the family. Even though [REDACTED] did not drink or smoke, his girlfriend smoked marijuana throughout the day and drank a bottle of Tequila every other day. She had been convicted of a second DUI ten months ago. She worked at the local strip club but used most of the money to support her habits. [REDACTED] would get mad at her for not bringing money home and would hit her. Her family noticed that she was

being abused and called the police and Child Protective Services. They felt that the children's lives were in danger. [REDACTED] girlfriend told the police that her family was lying but Child Protective Services took the children until they figured out what was going on. The abuse continued for years until she grew tired of the abuse. She called the police when they had their last fight. She filed charges on [REDACTED] and began getting help for her addictions. She started to turn her life around. She got a stable job, a house and custody of her children. When [REDACTED] was found guilty and went to prison three months ago, his girlfriend cut off all ties to him.

Aside from his girlfriend, [REDACTED] has a very small group of friends that he stayed close with after dropping out of school. He hangs around with these guys every day. They are also drug dealers, and one of his friends in this group is also the supplier. Everyone has been in trouble before, and two of them have been to prison before.

[REDACTED] reports that he doesn't have trouble paying attention, but he often did things without thinking or taking things into consideration such as the consequences of his actions. Under stressful situations [REDACTED] reported feeling out of control and thus would lash out at others, especially with his girlfriend. He beat her in the same manner that his stepfather would abuse his mother. The abuse that [REDACTED] suffered and witnessed plays over and over in his mind. It created rage in [REDACTED] that he would revisit often especially when he didn't know what to do about issues that occurred. He would rather just give up or pretend it wasn't happening than deal with the issues.

[REDACTED] was in rage when he was convicted of the aggravated assault charge. He felt that it was okay for him to hit his girlfriend because he considered her "his property." Also, his stepfather was a part of the system, police officer, and no one did anything about him abusing his mother causing her death. [REDACTED] stated that no one else gets into trouble with the law and that he just has bad luck. [REDACTED] felt the system was a joke and no one should be locked up if the police was not held accountable for their actions. He felt like he was not treated fairly being arrested and convicted. He felt like since he didn't kill her that he should get released because it was only a household concern. [REDACTED] stated that the court was making him an example which was "stupid because it wasn't a murder case." He thinks that he should not be held accountable when she was purposely egging him on and he had no control over the situation. He stated that he doesn't think much about the consequences of his actions until it is too late. Once he handles the situation when his girlfriend pushes his buttons, he is "as cool as a cucumber". He reports no heightened emotions during these situations, just anger.

*APPENDIX B Memos and Emails*  
**INTRODUCTORY MEMO**

To: Department of Corrections Staff  
From: [INSERT]  
Date: [INSERT DATE]  
Subject: Inter-rater Reliability Process

You are receiving this memo because you have completed training on the risk assessment and needs questionnaire (needs q). One of the next steps in the rollout of these new tools is to ensure proper scoring of the tools, known as inter-rater reliability. As mentioned during the risk assessment training that you all participated in, inter-rater agreement refers to the consistency to which people score the risk tool. In other words, if several people score the tool the same way when presented with the same information, do they get the same answers and score? Inter-rater reliability refers to the ability to maintain agreement over time. The goal is to eventually get MDOC to at least 80% agreement. As we discussed during the initial training, this is not likely to happen right away. Most organizations start with agreement levels much lower than that (often in the 20-30% range) and clarification, coaching, and further training is needed to get to the 80% benchmark.

The first part of the inter-rater reliability process will consist of completing online practice assessments which will be used to determine inter-rater agreement and reliability. Over the next few months, all staff who have been trained on the risk assessment and needs questionnaire will be sent a link to a practice assessment and will be asked to complete the risk assessment and needs q using the scenario provided. The information will be compiled and used to assess where additional clarification is needed and to see how MDOC is progressing towards the target benchmarks.

We will be sending out the link to the first scenario on INSERT DATE with a request that you please complete the practice risk assessment and needs q using the scenario provided by 5pm on INSERT DATE. Once the data have been analyzed, we will send around an email with information on what percent of participants scored each question correct.

For your reference, we've included the inter-rater reliability schedule for the next few months:

- INSERT DATES

If you have any questions or did not receive the inter-rater reliability assessment on the dates provided above, please reach out to INSERT CONTACT NAME at INSERT EMAIL.

Thank you for your participation!

[SIGNATURE]

**INITIAL SURVEYMONKEY® EMAIL**

Subject: Inter-rater Reliability Scoring Exercise

Dear Participant,

You are receiving this email because you have completed training on the Risk Assessment and Needs Questionnaire (needs-Q). One of the next steps in the rollout of these new tools is to ensure proper scoring of the tools, known as inter-rater reliability (IRR). Below is your personalized link for the IRR scoring exercise. Please **DO NOT SHARE** this e-mail with anyone. It is for your personal use, as each invitation is unique. Everyone receiving this email is **required** to participate.

Please score the risk assessment and needs-q using the scenario provided in the link, answering all questions in the survey to the best of your ability. The exercise must be completed by 5pm on Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Instructions:**

1. Ensure you have a blank needs-q and risk assessment forms for this activity before starting the activity. (It may also help to have the scoring guide for the needs-q out while completing the activity.)
2. The vignette will appear on the second page.
3. Use the Vignette to score all of the items on the needs-q and risk assessment.
4. If you need to step away from working on the assessment, you can still use the link you were provided. Simply click on the link again, and it will take you to the last question you worked on. Please be sure you do not share your link with anyone. If someone needs a link, please contact [INSERT CONTACT NAME] (information below).
5. Once you have completed each question, review your answers and on the last page of the survey click "Submit". (**Note:** Your answers will not be submitted until you click "Submit.")

If you have any difficulty with accessing or answering the exercise, please contact [INSERT CONTACT NAME] at [INSERT CONTACT'S EMAIL].

Thank you for your participation,

[INSERT CONTACT NAME]  
[INSERT CONTACT'S TITLE]

### **REMINDER/FINAL REMINDER EMAILS**

Good Morning,

This is a [final] reminder to participate in the [INSERT ACTIVITY NUMBER] interrater reliability activity. The activity will be closing today, [INSERT DATE] at [INSERT TIME].

You are receiving this email because the system indicates that you have not completed the assessment. As a reminder, **all people receiving the email are required to participate.**

If you need any assistance in completing the survey, please contact [INSERT CONTACT NAME] at [INSERT CONTACT'S EMAIL].

Thank you for participating.

[INSERT SIGNATURE]

### **COACHING MEMO EMAIL**

Good Morning/Afternoon,

Thank you to everyone who participated in the third inter-rater reliability activity. We had INSERT NUMBER OF PEOPLE THAT PARTICIPATED (out of NUMBER THAT WERE INVITED) participate in the third activity, and overall, the results were good. We have attached a coaching memo to help you improve the scoring of each item. We have also given additional feedback on three of the domains (INSERT DOMAINS WHERE FEEDBACK WAS PROVIDED) to assist you in the overall scoring of those areas. Feedback has also been provided for the risk assessment.

It is important to remember that the goal is to eventually get MDOC to at least 80% agreement in each of the items, and in the overall scoring of both the risk assessment and needs-q tools. As we discussed during the initial training, this is not likely to happen right away. Most organizations start with agreement levels much lower than that (often in the 20-30% range) and clarification, coaching, and further training is needed to get to the 80% benchmark. MDOC is on track to achieve this benchmark by the third activity. In order to meet this goal, please use the feedback and tips provided in the attached memo.

Thank you for participating.

[Insert Signature]

## APPENDIX C Analysis Tables and Formulas

### Find and Replace with Table

Find What:	Replace with:
+1 26 or younger	1
+0 27 or older	0
+0 No gang involvement	0
+0 Self-reported gang involvement	0
+1 Gang Involved	1
+0 One felony at booking	0
+1 Two felonies at booking	1
+2 Three or more felonies at booking	2
+0 Zero prior prison incarcerations	0
+0 Prior incarcerations from other jurisdiction (the offender does not have prior MDOC incarcerations but does have prior out of state, self-reported, or interstate compact incarcerations)	0
+1 One prior prison incarceration	1
+2 Two or more prison incarcerations	2
+0 No institutional violations	0
+1 At least one institutional violation	1

### Formulas for Risk Assessment Score Table

Cell Number	Formula
C2	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,0)
C4	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,1)
C6	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,2)
C8	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,3)
C10	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,4)
C12	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,5)
C14	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,6)
C16	=COUNTIF(DATA!G:G,7)

### Formulas for Risk Level Table

Cell Number	Formula
F2	=COUNTIF(Data!G:G,0)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,1)
F3	=COUNTIF(Data!G:G,2)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,3)
F4	=COUNTIF(Data!G:G,4)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,5)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,6)+COUNTIF(Data!G:G,7)

*APPENDIX D Coaching Memo Example*  
**Mississippi Inter-rater Reliability Scenario #3 Coaching Memo**  
**Community**  
**February 26, 2018**

Quality assurance is an essential part of the implementation of a risk and needs assessment. A primary way to ensure quality implementation is through assessing inter-rater reliability, or the consistency with which staff score the risk assessment and needs-q. In other words, if several people are presented with the same information and score the tool independently, do they get the same results and scores? The ultimate goal of this kind of quality assurance activity is consistency (or agreement) and accuracy in scoring over time; MDOC's goal is to reach and maintain at least 80% scoring agreement. Most organizations start with agreement levels closer to the 20-30% range, but with clarification of scoring rules, coaching, and additional training, do achieve the 80% benchmark.

For the MDOC's inter-rater reliability activities, we look at how all respondents scored the risk assessment and needs-q. For the risk assessment, we want to know how many people achieved the correct risk score and the correct risk level. This is important because, though everyone may achieve the correct risk level, they may not achieve the correct risk score. The scores are crucial because they drive risk levels and impact the way people are supervised, as well as the development of their case plans. This is also true for the needs-q. We look at each item (question) on the Needs-Q to be sure everyone is answering the item (question) the same, and then we also look at how many people score every item in a particular domain correctly.

In the sections below, you will find the following information:

- Risk assessment inter-rater results by item, or the percentage of respondents who scored each of the items correctly;
- Needs-q inter-rater results by item, or the percentage of respondents who scored each of the items correctly;
- Item-by-item feedback for questions where agreement is below 80%; and,
- Recommendations to improve scoring proficiency

This information is intended to inform MDOC whether clarification is needed on certain items, and where additional training or coaching may be needed.



### Risk Assessment

For the James Doe scenario, 95% of respondents (175 out of 184) achieved the correct risk level of High Risk, and 76% (139 out of 184) achieved the correct risk score of 6.

The bullet points below show the percentage of respondents who answered each of the risk assessment questions correctly. MDOC staff did an excellent job in achieving the 80% benchmark for all five items on the risk assessment:

- *Age*: 89% of respondents scored this item correctly. The correct answer was "0 Points = the offender is 27 years of age or older at start of supervision."
- *Gang Involvement*: 94% of respondents scored this item correctly. The correct answer was "1 point = gang involvement."
- *Total Number of Current Felonies*: 91% of respondents scored this item correctly. The correct answer was "2 points = three or more felonies at time of supervision start on current case."
- *Number of Prior Incarcerations*: 92% of respondents scored this item correctly. The correct answer was "2 points = two or more prior incarcerations."
- *Institutional Violations*: 90% of respondents scored this item correctly. The correct answer was "1 point = at least 1 institutional violation."

### Recommendations:

- When scoring the risk assessment, it is important to look at the following sections of the scenario for information about the individual's past: Current Supervision Information, Criminal History, and Gang Involvement.
- When completing the risk assessment in situations with real clients, the age will be pre-populated with the individual's name and MDOC information. However, staff will need to look at the individual's file for the background information to fill in the Gang Involvement, Current Felonies, Prior Incarcerations, and Institutional Violations items.
  - It is important to remember the scoring definition for the *Total Number of Current Felonies* item: "Only felony convictions for the current supervision should be counted. If there are multiple counts of the same crime (e.g., two counts of felony burglary), this counts as two felonies. Do not count prior felony convictions from previous cases. Do not count felonies for the current case that do not result in a conviction. To score this item, add the total number of all felonies in the current conviction."

### Needs-Q

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents who answered each item (question) on the needs-q correctly. The results show that, item-by-item, staff met the 80% benchmark for two-thirds of the items.

**Table 1. Item-by-item analysis of the percent of respondents who scored the item correctly**

Employment/Education	% Correct
Are you currently unemployed or were you unemployed prior to incarceration?	86%

Have you ever been fired from a job?	92%
Have most of your jobs been for less than a year?	92%
Were you unable to graduate from high school or earn a GED?	85%
Were you ever suspended or expelled from school?	96%
Have you typically had poor relationships with job supervisors, fellow workers, teachers, and fellow students?	97%
Would your most recent job supervisor or most recent teacher say your work performance was poor or you had difficulty getting along with others?	95%
<b>Substance Abuse</b>	<b>% Correct</b>
Do you have a history of alcohol abuse or problems with alcohol?	94%
Do you have a history of drug abuse or problems with drugs?	98%
Do you have family or friends who have problems with drugs or alcohol?	60%
Have drugs or alcohol caused problems with your jobs or school?	81%
Have drugs or alcohol caused problems with any relationships?	89%
Have you been in trouble with the law for drugs or alcohol?	98%
Have you ever participated in treatment for drugs or alcohol?	95%
Do you believe drugs or alcohol are a current problem?	53%
<b>Attitudes</b>	<b>% Correct</b>
Do you believe that most people get into trouble with the law?	87%
Do you believe that your trouble with the law is due to bad luck or misunderstanding?	88%
Do you believe the police and court treated you unfairly?	42%
Was your sentence on the current case unfair?	40%
Did the police or court make a bigger deal out of your case than necessary?	90%
Should the law focus more time on other crimes instead of the crime you were convicted of?	55%
<b>Relationships</b>	<b>% Correct</b>
Do you have family members who have been in trouble with the law?	94%
Do you have at least one close friend who has been in trouble with the law?	68%
Have you participated in activities with family or friends that could get you in trouble with the law?	70%
Have family members ever been upset with you for being in trouble with the law?	95%
Have close friends ever been upset with you for being in trouble with the law?	91%
Have the majority of your friends or associates been in trouble with the law?	51%
Do your family members, who have not been in trouble with the law, avoid seeing you or talking with you?	48%
Is it hard to have a close relationship with family or friends who have not been in trouble with the law?	82%
Do you spend the majority of your free time with others who have been in trouble with the law?	53%
<b>Personality</b>	<b>% Correct</b>
Do you often do things without thinking?	93%
Do you act immediately to situations that are stressful?	70%
Is it hard to pay attention?	93%
Do you try new things because 'you only live once'?	91%

Do you feel that sometimes you are not in control?	71%
Do you respond to many situations in an angry manner?	60%
Is it hard to be calm when you are stressed or upset?	40%
Do you enjoy taking risks?	90%
Do people close to you know how to make you angry or intentionally 'push your buttons'?	91%
Do some individuals just ask for trouble or problems?	82%
Do you find it easier to give up or ignore a problem rather than deal with it?	89%

### Recommendations

Based on the results of the third inter-rater reliability activity, we have provided information and tips below to improve scoring in three of the domains: Attitudes, Relationships and Personality.

- Attitudes
  - When scoring this section, it is important to consider the responses to questions in the other sections of the assessment to help answer these items. Many of antisocial attitudes measured in this section can be revealed when an individual discusses other areas of his or her life (e.g., substance abuse, relationships).
  - When the questions in this domain are asked directly, or word-for-word, individuals may try to mask some of their antisocial attitudes. For this reason, be sure to look for patterns in their attitude throughout the interview process that reflect a general disdain for the law, rules, the police, or the courts, for example.
  - Also, listen for patterns of rationalizations and justifications for their behavior, blaming the victim or the criminal justice system for their trouble, and other displays of antisocial attitudes that may be expressed during other sections of the needs-q interview.
- Relationships
  - When scoring this section, it is important to remember the definitions for 'family members,' 'close friends,' 'associates,' and, 'trouble with the law.' These definitions will make scoring the items easier.
    - 'Family members' – Individuals with whom the offender has a legal or a biological relationship. 'Family members' may include spouses, parents, stepparents, siblings, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.
    - 'Close friends' – Individuals with whom the offender does not have a legal or a biological relationship, but who the offender reports are close to them. 'Close friends' may include significant others (current and former) and other non-family members that the offender considers close and with whom the offender spends a significant amount of time.
    - 'Associates' – Individuals with whom the offender does not have a legal or a biological relationship and whom the offender does not identify as a close friend, but with whom the offender may engage with occasionally. 'Associates' may include neighbors or coworkers, or others with whom the offender socializes occasionally.

- 'Trouble with the law' – This does not require convictions or incarcerations. 'Trouble with the law' can mean being arrested, detained in jail, and having court dates, for example. If the offender is young or has young siblings or young friends, 'trouble with the law' may include involvement in the juvenile justice system.
  - When scoring this section, it is important to remember that the ultimate goal is to assist the offender in building strong relationships with individuals who are prosocial and are supportive of the offender adopting a prosocial lifestyle. This section looks at who the offender is associating with to determine what changes the offender needs to make to achieve this goal. If the offender does not have prosocial and supportive family and friends, and primarily has antisocial peers in his or her life, the offender will be at greater risk to recidivate.
- Personality
  - The purpose of this section is to identify patterns of antisocial personality characteristics. This section should reflect overall patterns in an individual's personality and behavior rather than isolated incidents. In scoring these items, assessors should look for patterns of behavior across more than one area of life (e.g., family, friends, work/school, social).
  - The scoring of the items in this section are based on the offender's self-report.
- Attitudes, Peers, and Personality are important because they are part of the Big Four when looking at an offender's criminogenic needs.
- When scoring the scenarios, assessors should score based on the information provided; be careful not to make assumptions. When conducting the needs-q interview, assessors should be sure to ask enough questions to gather information to score each of the items on the assessment (this is one limitation of the scenarios since we cannot get additional information to assist with scoring).

Table 2 includes feedback for those items where staff did not achieve the 80% benchmark. This information is provided to assist in scoring these items correctly on the next inter-rater reliability activity and as you use the needs-q moving forward.

**Table 2. Item-by-item feedback on how to improve scoring for items that were below the 80% benchmark**

Domain	Item	Correct Answer	% Correct	Reason for Correct Answer
Substance Abuse	3- Does the offender have family or friends who currently have problems with drugs?	Yes	60%	Mr. ■ stated once he started using and making methamphetamine, this led to his association with "new" friends and a life of criminal behavior. He stated these are the friends that he was with every time he was arrested. The scoring guide states "'Family'/'Friends' should include people that the offender sees and spends time with on a regular basis. 'Problems' may include, for example, legal problems (e.g., arrest, incarceration) related to the use of drugs/alcohol." Due to the friends Mr. Ray hangs around with and their use of drugs, this item should be scored 'Yes.'
	8- Does he/she believe drugs or alcohol are a current problem?	Yes	58%	Mr. ■ stated he was ordered to have drug and alcohol treatment, which he says helped, but only until he was released. Every time he has gotten out of prison he reports that he could not stay away from the drugs. The scoring guide states "Score this item 'Yes' if the offender indicates that he/she thinks he/she has a problem with drugs and/or alcohol at the present time." Since Mr. ■ believes that every time he leaves prison he goes back to drugs, recognizes this as a problem, and is recently out of prison, this item should be scored 'Yes.'
Attitude	3- Does he/she believe the police and court treated them unfairly?	No	42%	Mr. ■ stated he felt the judge in his case was unfair but did not state whether he felt the police/courts were unfair as well. The scoring guide states "If the offender reports that he/she was treated unfairly by one person in the processing of the case, but not by the system as a whole, this item should be scored 'No.'" Since Mr. ■ only stated the judge in this case, this item should be marked 'No.'

Domain	Item	Correct Answer	% Correct	Reason for Correct Answer
Relationships	4- Was the sentence on the current case unfair?	No	40%	Mr. ■■■ stated that at least the judge suspended most of his sentence, so he didn't have to serve the whole thing. The scoring guide states "This item specifically measures the offender's feelings toward the <u>sentence</u> in the case (not the handling by police or courts). Score this item 'No' if the offender indicates that the sentence in the current case was fair." Since Mr. ■■■ agreed that the judge suspended most of the sentence and he was happy about that, this item should be scored 'No.'
	6- Does he/she believe that the law should focus more time on other crimes instead of the crime that he/she was convicted of?	Yes	55%	The scoring guide states "This item should be scored 'Yes' if the offender indicates that he/she believes the law incorrectly focused on his/her crime. The offender may indicate that the current crime 'isn't that serious.' In that case, this item should be marked 'Yes.' It is important to distinguish if the offender also expects the law enforcement and the courts should focus on other crimes." Mr. ■■■ stated he thinks that he should not be in trouble since he didn't commit the murder himself. Therefore, this item should be marked as 'Yes.'
	2- Does the offender have at least one close friend who has been in trouble with the law?	Yes	68%	Mr. ■■■ stated once he started associating with his "new" friends, his life of criminal behavior also started and he was with them every time he was arrested. The scoring guide states "This item should be scored 'Yes' if the offender indicates that he/she has at least one close friend who has ever been arrested or in 'trouble with the law.' 'Trouble with the law' is defined as arrested, detained in jail, picked up by the police, having court dates, for example. This does not require convictions or incarcerations." Therefore, since Mr. ■■■ spends the majority of his time with these "new" friends and they were together for all his arrests, it can be inferred they too have been in trouble with the law. Therefore, this item should be marked 'Yes.'
	3- Has he/she participated in activities with family or friends that could get him/her in trouble with the law?	Yes	70%	Again, Mr. ■■■ stated his criminal behavior is done with his "new" friends. The scoring guide states "This item should be scored 'Yes' if the offender reports that he/she has engaged in criminal behavior with individuals that fall in the 'family'/'close friend' category. This behavior does not have to result in criminal charges, but if it could the item should be scored 'Yes.'" Therefore, this item should be marked 'Yes.'

Domain	Item	Correct Answer	% Correct	Reason for Correct Answer
Personality	6- Have the majority of his/her friends or associates been in trouble with the law?	Yes	51%	Mr. [REDACTED] stated the majority of his time is spent with this "new" friends. These friends have been in trouble with the law. The scoring guide states "Score this item 'Yes' if the majority (more than half) of the offender's close friend and/or associates have ever been arrested, convicted, placed on community supervision, and/or incarcerated." Therefore, this item should be marked 'Yes.'
	7- Does his/her family members who have not been in trouble with the law, avoid seeing or talking to him/her?	No	48%	Mr. [REDACTED] stated his family members for a period of time disowned him. However, he then stated that, since that time, they have repaired their relationships and they have forgiven him and support him now. The scoring guide states "If the offender reports that he/she regularly sees his law-abiding family members, this item should be scored 'No.' Therefore, since Mr. [REDACTED] has mended his relationships and sees his family now, this item should be marked 'No.'
	9- Does he/she spend the majority of his/her time with others who have been in trouble with the law?	Yes	53%	Mr. [REDACTED] stated he spends all of his time with his "new" friends who have been in trouble with the law. The scoring guide states "Score this item 'Yes' if the offender reports that he spends most of his/her free time with individuals who have been in trouble with the law." Therefore, this item should be marked 'Yes.'
	2- Does he/she act immediately to situations that are stressful?	No	70%	Mr. [REDACTED] stated that in stressful situations or when he is upset, he likes to be alone to relax and think things through. The scoring guide states "If the offender reports that he/she likes to weigh many options before deciding how to deal with stress, or relates that he/she has many prosocial coping strategies to deal with stress, this item should be marked 'No.'" Therefore, since Mr. [REDACTED] coping strategy appears to be prosocial, this item should be scored 'No.'
	5- Does he/she feel that sometimes he/she is not in control?	Yes	71%	Mr. [REDACTED] stated he likes to feel in control of every situation in his life, although he doesn't always feel in control. The scoring guide states "Score this item 'Yes' if the offender indicates he/she does not feel in control of the circumstances of his/her life." Therefore, this item should be scored 'Yes.'

Domain	Item	Correct Answer	% Correct	Reason for Correct Answer
	6- Does he/she respond to many situations in an angry manner?	Yes	60%	Mr. [REDACTED] stated that people intentionally push his buttons when he is angry until he can't control himself any longer and lashes out, typically by hitting the person. He stated that this has been happening a lot recently. The scoring guide states "This item assesses the extent to which the offender responds to situations with anger. Indicators may include reports that the offender engages in many verbal or physical altercations, especially if he/she is the instigator in these situations." Based on the scenario information, this item should be marked 'Yes.'
	7- Is it hard to be calm when he/she is stressed or upset?	No	40%	Mr. [REDACTED] stated that in stressful situations or when he is upset, he likes to be alone to relax and think things through. The scoring guide states "This item assesses the extent to which the offender is able to remain calm in stressful situations. Unlike the previous question, this item assesses responses to stress and elevated emotional states, rather than anger. If the offender reports being able to calmly handle most stressful situations, this item should be scored 'No.' Look for patterns in coping skills, not an occasional or one-time negative response to stressful or emotional situations." Since Mr. [REDACTED] has prosocial coping mechanisms for dealing with stressful situations or when he is upset, this item should be marked 'No.'