Timeline Followback — TLFB — Booster

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Training Objectives

- Learn the purpose of the TLFB
- Describe the benefits of this particular assessment of substance use behavior
- Learn how to prepare, introduce and guide participants through the assessment
- Learn how to increase skill through practice and administration
Why the TLFB?

- Flexible
  - Timeframe
  - Substance type
  - Wide range of information about use
- Provides relatively accurate portrayal of substance use
- Use with a range of substance use severity
- Good psychometric properties
- Interview format
- Use with adolescents and adults
**TLFB Basics (1)**

- Method using calendars to help people retrospectively estimate recent, daily alcohol and drug use
  - Alcohol: quantity per day (standard drinks)
  - Drugs: yes/no use per day, route of administration
- Administered by a trained facilitator
- Guide participants step by step (systematically) through recall of use during a specified period of time
- Use of memory aids to help with recall
TLFB Basics (2)

- Used in clinical and research settings
- Validated (reliability and validity) measure with alcohol, marijuana and other drugs (Sobell et al., 1979; 1996)
  - From 1 week to 2 years
  - With clinical and non-clinical populations
Preparation

- Confirm time period and ready calendars for data collection
  - Baseline calendar generation
  - Study calendar generation
- Reminder: black ink
- Note standard holidays and other major events
Introducing the TLFB to Participants

- What is the purpose?
  - Explain the use of calendars – to help people remember their daily substance use over a specified period of time
  - Research vs Clinical

- How much time will this take?
  - Approximately 15 minutes for 90 days

- Is this information confidential?
Encouragement & Reassurance

- What would be your reaction if someone asked you to do this exercise?
  - There is a standard process we use that aids accurate recollection
  - “We will use a number of memory aids to help with recall [help you remember] and reconstruct this period of time…”
  - “We realize you won’t have perfect recall – that’s okay!”
  - “We’ll work through this together.”
Interview Logistics

- Write directly onto the calendar; the calendar is the source document
- Complete each day individually
- Data should be collected for each day of the assessment time period
Memory Aids

- Think about starting a conversation about what’s been happening in the participant’s life
  - Holidays and events (4th of July, Memorial Day, super bowl, election, major news story, religious holidays)
  - Key personal or significant dates (starting new job, seeing a new person, start or end of school, anniversary, birthday, death, self-help meetings)
  - Anchor dates (vacation, incarceration, inpatient treatment, hospitalization)
  - Black and white days – days of known abstinence and days of known use
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<td>Day Off Son’s Birthday Dr. Appt</td>
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Interview Technique

- Choose to start from yesterday and work backwards or vice versa
- If someone is very hesitant about the task, it may be helpful to begin with yesterday
- Make use of standard weeks/regular Patterns
- Consult a date book if available
- “Give it your best guest”
Alcohol Use

- Goal = number of standard drinks each day
  - “0” for days without alcohol use
- Standard Alcoholic Drinks
  - Promotes consistency across assessments / participants
  - Utilize visual aid to define a standard drink; share the Standard Drink Card with participant
- Standard Drink Conversion
  - 1 SD = 12 oz beer
  - 1 SD = 5 oz wine
  - 1 SD = 1 oz hard liquor/spirits
Interview Strategies for Alcohol Data

- Establish alcohol use boundaries
  - What is the least/most you drank during this period

- Exaggeration technique for challenging situations – was it 12 beers or 1 beer
  - Use with vague estimates (e.g., “I drank a lot on Saturday, who knows how much”)
  - “Does a lot mean 12 beers or 2 beers?”
Drug Use

- Yes / No for use on a given day
  - This can be for drugs in general or each specific substance
- Marijuana and cigarettes – estimate the number of joints/cigarettes per day
Drug Use

Route of Administration

- Often, studies will want to know the route of administration for a given drug
  - Note a number for the route or write it out
  - E.g., ASI notation: 1=oral; 2=nasal; 3=smoking; 4=non-IV injection; 5=IV injection
  - If more than 1 route; list most invasive/extreme
Order of Data Collection

- Depending on the participant’s pattern of use, you can start with alcohol and move to drugs or collect simultaneously.
  - Often depends on patterns – e.g., if a participant only drinks when they use cocaine.
## August-2010

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Alcohol Use: (N) (Y) ____ (SD)
Drug Use: (N) (Y)
Co, Op, Am, Me, Ec Bz, Ba, Ox, Md, Mj

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Demonstration

- Introduction
- Memory aids
- Recent use
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<td>2 Abstinent</td>
<td>3 SD: 0</td>
<td>4 SD: 0</td>
<td>5 SD: 3</td>
<td>6 SD: 8</td>
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<td>½ day wk</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>½ day wk</td>
<td>Tx Group</td>
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TLFB Summary Form

- Generate a variety of variables
- Summarizes information from the TLFB Calendars
  - Tailored to match research study objectives
  - Drug Use: days of use; routes of administration; frequency of use; amount; dollar amount spent
  - Alcohol Use: days of use; standard drinks per drinking day; number of heavy drinking days; dollar amount spent
Common Errors

- Wrong data collection timeframe
- Illegible handwriting
- Use of uncommon abbreviations or symbols
- Skip part of the interview process or techniques
  - Rush through introduction or memory aids
TLFB Administration Summary

- Prepare calendars
- Confirm data collection timeframe
- Orientation & introduction
- Dates, events, & memory aids
- Substances used during the time period
- Abstinent periods
- Recent use (as far back as possible)
- Standard/typical weeks
- Summary and check-in
Practice

- Competent administration of the TLFB comes with practice
  - No substitute for actual administration of the assessment
- In preparation for studies, multiple practice administrations should be completed with an observer (or a supervisor reviewing an audio recording) providing feedback
Thank you!

Question or comments?

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TLFB instructional materials are available through Nova Southeastern University: http://www.nova.edu/gsc/online_files.html