

## MEMORANDUM

February, 1997

TO: Wally Rabbitskin, Alcohol and Drug Advisor, CBHSSJB

FROM: Jill Torrie, Public Health Module, Cree Territory of James Bay

SUBJECT: **An interpretation of the response on use and perception of social services in the protective factors survey in Mistissini (Shecapio study).**

### **How accurate is a survey like this?**

The researchers identified 703 youth between 10 and 21 in Mistissini. They hoped to survey 462 because with these numbers they would have heard from 2 out of every 3 youth in the community. As it was, they talked to 326, which is almost half.

They hoped to talk to 2 out of every 3 youth.

They talked to 1 out of every 2 or half the youth.

Obviously, talking to 2 out of every 3 youth gives stronger results than talking only to 1 out of 2. By talking to 2 out of 3 youth, you know that the survey results reflect what more than half the youth think. By talking to only half the youth, you only know what half think.

For a question like # 23, 179 responded. This means that half of the youth in the survey answered this question. So the answer reflects what a quarter of the youth in the community think.

### **Do people answer questions honestly on a survey?**

A survey like this gives different kinds of information. It all depends on the question, how it is asked, whether anyone would have a reason to give a false response. There are different reasons someone may give a false response.

False responses may have to do with the questions themselves:

- someone who does not read well may misinterpret the question
- the way the question is worded may be confusing
- if the question before concerned a different topic, the reader may confuse the meaning of the question which follows.

Someone may give a false response because of what is being asked:

- someone may not want to admit, even in a questionnaire, of something they are ashamed of, or something which makes them appear in a bad light
- someone may feel that the person doing the study has no business asking a nosy question so they may refuse to answer

- someone having a problem they have not been able to deal with may not want to admit having the problem, even to themselves
- if a question raises uncomfortable feelings for the person answering, that person may decide not to answer or to give the answer that is most neutral

In general, studies show that most people will respond honestly, especially on anonymous questionnaires.

**How should confusing results be interpreted?**

In this survey, few youth said they had used social services, yet many youth said their privacy would not be respected at social services. How can you interpret these kinds of confusing results?

Possibly what is going on with a result like this is a *negative perception* about social services. Even though most youth say they have not used social services, social services has a bad reputation among youth. The survey does not tell us if this is a correct interpretation or not.

However, if we take this finding from the survey and check it against other sources, we can see that this view of social services appears at other times. For example, the Youth Forum reported that:

(page 20) There is no respect for confidentiality. At the clinic, employees gossip and talk about their clients’ problems to others. Even our friends .....

(page 24) discipline clinic employees who do not .....

QUESTION	#	RESPONSE	COMMENTS
79 told about sniffing risks	247	51% NNADAP 3 % social worker	Why did 20% in question 78 say no one had talked to them about sniffing? Were these the students not in school enough to hear these messages? Why did 47% say they don’t have enough information about bad effects of sniffing? (Could this be the way the question was written, or does it reflect a need for more information?)
83 told about risks of smoking dope	203	40% NNADAP 5 % counsellor 3 % social worker	Why did 30% say no one had talked to them about the risks in question 82?

87	told about drinking	222	19 % NNADAP etc.	
25	talked to s/o about problems	69	4 % social worker	very few admitted talking to a social worker about problems.
84	go for help for smoking dope	273	12 % social worker 8 % NNADAP 46 % don't know	it is interesting that 46% reported not knowing where to go. Were they tired of answering the questions? Maybe youth don't think about 'needing help to stop' - maybe the question is poorly asked.' Or maybe 46% don't know?