



# Physician Survey Instructions and Tips

## About the Survey

This survey is a marketing tool to help you demonstrate and gain support for establishing palliative care services at your institution. It is designed to help you accomplish the following four objectives:

1. Assess physician attitudes toward palliative care at your institution
2. Educate physician colleagues about palliative care
3. Solicit physician input on establishing palliative care services in order to involve and engage your colleagues
4. Build a strong case to hospital administrators by demonstrating physician support or demand for palliative care services

Remember that we designed this survey as a starting point for you. Adding your organization's logo to it and tailoring it to your institution will increase its relevancy for your physician colleagues. Please feel free to edit or alter the survey to suit your needs and circumstances.

## How to Distribute the Survey

### 1. Seek a representative sample.

In traditional survey research, it is considered important to select a sample that is “representative” in terms of its scope and size to ensure results are statistically meaningful. In the case of a survey conducted with physicians in a hospital or another institution, the total number of physicians employed will be fairly small, making it difficult to select a meaningful sample and to follow the stringent criteria for larger surveys. While you can't meet the formal statistical criteria of survey research, you do want to follow some of its general principles to conduct good research at your institution. You should:

- a. Select a target group of physicians who will be affected by the services you are proposing.* If you are trying to establish palliative care services across your entire institution, you will need to survey as many physicians as possible. If you want to establish services in a specific department or for specific patients (e.g., oncology), you may survey physicians specific to certain units or specialties.

- b. Try to survey all the physicians in your target group.* Since the total population of physicians at your institution or in a particular unit(s) is relatively small by survey standards, you should try to survey all the physicians in your target group rather than a sample of them.

- c. Compare responders to non-responders.* You may not be able to accomplish your goal of getting completed surveys from all physicians in your target group. If that is the case, it is important to compare those who responded to the survey to those who didn't. If a specific type of physician is underrepresented, you may risk biasing the results by eliminating opinions that may be markedly different. If this occurs, try to encourage these individuals to complete the survey. If they do not, you may need to account for this bias when analyzing and reporting the survey results.

### 2. Assure anonymity.

Protecting respondent anonymity, especially in the workplace, is important. Some physicians may feel more comfortable if they don't

need to put their name on the survey. If you are surveying a small number of physicians, you may choose to collect the surveys personally. This way you can make a note to yourself about who has returned surveys without requiring physicians to put their name on it. If you are surveying a large number of physicians, it may be necessary to collect names on the survey to track which physicians have filled it out. Regardless of whether or not you collect names, let respondents know the results will be aggregated and reported in a way that will not reveal individuals' identities or responses.

3. Choose an opportune time and place.

Try to reach physicians when they are away from their clinical demands and you can approach them personally (e.g., before, at or after a meeting). Placing the survey in physician mailboxes should be a last resort. Ask someone who is respected and in a position of authority to write a cover letter to the survey.

4. Disclose the sponsor, purpose and use of the data.

Explain to respondents verbally and in a cover letter who is conducting the survey, why and how the data will be used. Be accurate but not opinionated: e.g., you want to assess potential need and support for palliative care services among physicians at your institution. Tell respondents who will receive the results. Offer to share results with respondents.

## How to Use the Data

1. Once you tabulate the results, analyze and frame them to support your case.

### Example: Sampling Your Audience

*Suppose you want to create a palliative care service in your oncology department. You have ten physicians that practice in the oncology unit. You try to survey all ten, but only three complete the survey. It is difficult to make the case that you have adequately represented physicians in the entire unit with responses from only three, so you approach the physicians who have not completed the survey and ask them to fill it out again. After this reminder, you obtain five more responses for a total of eight completed surveys. You compare the two non-responders to your eight responders and find no obvious differences between them. For example, the non-responders are not the only two residents in the department, or they don't represent a different sub-specialty you would expect to influence their views on palliative care. You also will want to review the non-responders to make sure you have not left out a politically important person. Have you omitted the head of the department? Assuming your non-responders do not vary from your responders in any systematic way, you can be satisfied with your eight completed surveys.*

Some surveys are conducted simply to collect facts and percentages. Others, such as this survey, also can be used to promote a cause. Don't assume people will automatically interpret the results the way you do. Tell a compelling story with your data by setting it in the context in which you want others to interpret it. For example, highlight findings that build a strong case for palliative care. Don't just report the numbers. Explain how the numbers support the argument you are making.

2. Send your data to CAPC.

The results of surveys such as this help CAPC to gauge the level of interest in palliative care in many different kinds of institutions. Please share your survey and results with us at the address or email on the bottom of this page so we can gain broader insight into physicians' views. The data you send will be treated as confidential and will not be attributed to you or your institution unless you request otherwise. It also would be helpful if you could send your contact information and basic facts about your institution, including its size and type, so we can track patterns in survey results.

3. Let us know your feedback.

If you had particular problems or successes in using this survey, please let us know. Your input helps us to improve our materials.