

# Promise Neighborhoods Frequently Asked Questions

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## Abstract

Urban Institute provides technical assistance to Promise Neighborhood implementation grantees to ensure that they can successfully collect and use data to make continuous improvements, measure their results, and report to the U.S. Department of Education. To assist grantees in developing case management systems, collecting consistent and uniform *GPRA* indicators, and meeting reporting requirements, the Urban Institute released the [Guidance Document](#) in February 2013.<sup>1</sup> Since its release, implementation grantees have asked Urban Institute for additional guidance on collecting *GPRA* indicators and other activities related to Promise Neighborhoods data. This Promise Neighborhoods Frequently Asked Questions document compiles those additional questions and technical assistance requests that Urban Institute has received since the release of the Guidance Document. This document also answers *GPRA* indicator target setting questions and other miscellaneous data technical assistance requests not covered in the Guidance Document.

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<sup>1</sup> *Measuring Performance: A Guidance Document for Promise Neighborhoods on Collecting Data and Reporting Results* (Comey et al. 2012). <http://www.urban.org/publications/412767.html>.

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## Promise Neighborhoods Frequently Asked Data Questions

### *GPR*A clarifications

**Question: What are the population and weights used for calculating *GPR*A 1?**

**Answer:** *GPR*A 1 is defined as the number and percent of children birth to kindergarten (ages 0 to 5) with a medical home (p. 59 in the [Guidance Document](#)). The information is collected during the neighborhood survey from parents and guardians, but the unit of analysis is the child. How a grantee administers their neighborhood survey will determine how *GPR*A 1 is calculated. Many grantees choose a random child ages 0–5 in a household. To calculate *GPR*A 1, these grantees need to weight the responses by the number of children ages 0–5 in the household. For example, if there are two children ages 0–5 in a household and the survey randomly selects one of them, the probability of selection was 0.5 and the weight is 2 (i.e., the inverse of 0.5). **Using this method requires grantees to know how many children ages 0–5 are in the household by collecting a household roster during the survey.**

Another method is to ask the question separately for all of the children ages 0 to 5 in the household. In this case, each of those responses has a weight of 1.

**Question: What is the correct population for *GPR*A 2?**

**Answer:** Target population for *GPR*A 2 is different than the population for all other *GPR*A indicators in that it is the sole *GPR*A based on children being served by Promise Neighborhood solutions. As stated in the [Guidance Document](#) (p. 64), the population for *GPR*A 2 is, “Children ages three and in kindergarten who participate in the Promise Neighborhood’s early childhood programs and target schools.” Therefore, for setting targets and reporting baselines and progress on *GPR*A 2, **Promise Neighborhoods are only expected to collect assessment information for children enrolled in programs or target schools.** It is anticipated, however, that enrollment and program penetration rates will increase from year to year and that *GPR*A 2 will over time include more children living in the Promise Neighborhood.

**Question: How do Promise Neighborhoods report on *GPR*A 2 if the early child care providers use different assessment tools?**

**Answer:** Ideally, each provider would use the same assessment tool to measure age-appropriate functioning for three-year-olds and children in kindergarten. However, grantees are likely partnered with multiple center- and home-based early child care providers that use different assessments and it may be very difficult, or impossible, for them to switch to a consistent tool. Therefore, the [Guidance Document](#) (pp. 64–65) says **grantees should report on *GPR*A 2 separately for each assessment tool used by service providers.** Grantees should not attempt to combine data for different assessments, however, since the measurement methods and domains are likely to be incompatible across distinct tools.

**Question: What is the correct calculation for formal home-based early learning settings or programs for *GPRA* 3?**

**Answer:** Under *GPRA* indicator 3 (pp. 67–72), there is an inconsistency in the [Guidance Document](#) definition for children attending home-based childcare (i.e., care received “outside of a childcare center from either a relative or nonrelative other than a parent or guardian”; p. 68). While the instructions for Equation 3.c says to “Calculate the number of children with a ‘yes’ to Question 3 and an answer of two or more in Question 4” (p. 69), Equation 3.c itself says to count the children if there are greater than two children being cared for by that provider. To clarify, **please use the definition in Equation 3.c**, and count the number of children in home-based care by calculating the number of children with a “yes” to Question 3 and an answer of greater than two (three or more) in Question 4.

The same inconsistency is present for the definition for children attending both center- and home-based childcare (the third part of *GPRA* 3). This indicator counts those children who are using **both center and home based care**, not a total of children using just one or the other. The definition of “home based care” should be consistent with that in Equation 3.c. **To clarify, Promise Neighborhoods should use the definition in Equation 3.e itself, and not the instructions to 3.e, when calculating this *GPRA*.**

**Question: Can Promise Neighborhoods choose what high school grade to use for *GPRA* 4?**

**Answer:** Yes, grantees are allowed to select the high school grade of their choosing for reporting high school students at or above grade level in state math and English language arts assessments. The [Guidance Document](#) (p. 73) recommends grantees use the high school grade identified by their school district.

**Question: Is average daily attendance or chronic absenteeism required for reporting on *GPRA* 5?**

**Answer:** The [Guidance Document](#) (p. 76) says Promise Neighborhoods should, at a minimum, collect the average daily attendance rates for 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grades. In addition, Promise Neighborhoods are encouraged to work with their school districts to measure and report the chronic absenteeism rate, which is considered to be a strong predictor for academic risk and school dropout, by grade in each of the target Promise Neighborhood schools. **To clarify, Promise Neighborhoods should collect average daily attendance rates for 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grades, and if possible, supplement that with chronic absenteeism rates.**

**Question: What are the recommended data sources for *GPRA* 7b (college enrollment without English and math remediation) and 7d (number and percentage of participants earning industry-recognized certificates or credentials)?**

**Answer:** Since there appear to be no national sources for this information, the best options currently are following up directly with postsecondary institutions and students. To follow-up directly with postsecondary institutions, some Promise Neighborhood have data-sharing agreements with local community colleges, universities, and other postsecondary institutions that enroll a high percentage of graduates from the target high school(s). To follow up directly with students, some grantees have considered fielding an alumni survey of graduates from the target high school(s). The survey can be sent to graduates' email address or phone number, depending on the contact information stored in the case management system.

The [Guidance Document](#) (p. 82) also recommends Promise Neighborhoods check if there are Statewide Longitudinal Data systems in place that track data for *GPRA* 7b and 7d. At present, only a small number of states have systems with this information, but more states are expected to include such data in the future.

***GPRA* 7 additional clarifications:**

**Data sources:** 7a and 7c share the same data source (a third-party postsecondary tracking service, such as the National Student Clearinghouse); and 7b and 7d share the same data source (alumni survey).

**Denominator:** 7a and 7b share the same denominator (graduating cohort 16 months after graduation); and 7c and 7d share the same denominator (most recent graduating cohort which could have graduated in 100 or 150 percent of traditional completion time by the reporting year)

**For 7a:** The Urban Institute [Guidance Document](#) recommends that grantees collect data for this *GPRA* indicator via a third-party postsecondary tracking service (p. 82). An example of such a service is the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). The Guidance Document suggests that the indicator measure the graduating cohort 16 months after graduation; therefore, the 2012 high school graduating cohort would ideally be used in the 2013 reporting year.

**For 7b:** No national sources or commonly available local administrative sources track these data. The Guidance Document recommends that grantees collect this data via an alumni survey, data-sharing agreements with postsecondary institutions that receive Promise Neighborhoods graduates, or other appropriate administrative data systems such as statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS). Like *GPRA* 7a, the Guidance Document suggests that the indicator measure the graduating cohort 16 months after graduation; therefore, the 2012 high school graduating cohort would ideally be used in the 2013 reporting year.

**For 7c:** The Urban Institute Guidance Document recommends that grantees collect data for this *GPRA* indicator via a third-party postsecondary tracking service, such as the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). The Guidance Document suggests that the indicator measure the most recent graduating cohort which could have graduated in 100 or 150 percent of traditional completion time by the reporting year; therefore, the 2007 high school graduating cohort would ideally be used in the 2013 reporting year.

**For 7d:** No national sources or commonly available local administrative sources track these data. The Guidance Document recommends that grantees collect this data via an alumni survey, data-sharing agreements with postsecondary institutions that receive Promise Neighborhoods graduates, or other appropriate administrative data systems such as statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS). Like *GPR*A 7c, the Guidance Document suggests that the indicator measure the most recent graduating cohort which could have graduated in 100 or 150 percent of traditional completion time by the reporting year; therefore, the 2007 high school graduating cohort would ideally be used in the 2013 reporting year.

**Question: What are the populations and weights used for calculating *GPR*A indicators 12, 13, and 14?**

**Answer:** *GPR*A indicators 12, 13, and 14 are collected from the neighborhood survey and measure behavior of parents with children birth to kindergarten entry, kindergarten through 8th grades, and 9th to 12th grade, respectively. Because these indicators measure the percent of parents, the denominator in the *GPR*A calculation should be the number of households. For example, the denominator in *GPR*A 12 should be number of households with children 0–5 years old. The same principle applies for *GPR*A 13 and 14 (the number of households with children in K through 8th grade for *GPR*A 13, and number of households with children 9th to 12th grade for *GPR*A 14).

### Individual-level *GPR*A indicators in the case management system

**Question: Are sites expected to collect *GPR*A indicator data through their case management systems?**

**Answer:** Yes, grantees are expected to collect *GPR*A indicators at the individual level and store them in the case management system. ***GPR*A indicators and component data elements collected and reported from summary school data, neighborhood surveys, and school climate surveys should also be collected specifically from the children and families enrolled in the Promise Neighborhood, and tracked in the case management system.**

Chapter 4 of [the Guidance Document](#) contains a section titled “Performance Measures in the Case Management Data System” under each *GPR*A indicator that describes how to collect that indicator at the individual level in the case management system (the data source and frequency of collection for that indicator). As an example, for collecting and storing *GPR*A 2 data at the individual level in the case management system (three-year-old- and kindergarten-age-appropriate functioning), Promise Neighborhoods should work with their partners to receive the identified individual-level assessment data for each three-year old and kindergarten student from the footprint who also attends targeted early childcare programs or schools.

**Question: When should data be collected for particular *GPR*A indicators through the case management system and for which populations?**

**Answer:** At minimum Promise Neighborhoods should collect the individual-level *GPR*A indicators on those populations measured by each *GPR*A who are enrolled in the Promise Neighborhood. However, given that these indicators are also important for all age groups, Promise Neighborhood are encouraged to collect the data on other age groups. For example, *GPR*A 1 (medical home) must be collected for all children ages 0–5, but this information should also be collected on children older than five year olds. Similarly, Promise Neighborhoods should collect test scores data on all students that live in the footprint or attend target schools, even though *GPR*A 4 only requires reporting on test scores of 3rd- through 8th-graders and one high school grade.

The Guidance Document (pp. 54–116) describes the frequency of data collection for each individual-level *GPR*A indicator (in the sections titled “Performance Measures in the Case Management Data System”). The recommended frequency of data collection varies by *GPR*A indicator, but at minimum each indicator should be collected or updated annually.

**Question: Why should sites collect individual-level *GPR*A indicators in their case management system?**

**Answer:** Virtually every *GPR*A indicator that Promise Neighborhoods are required to report on are from summary-level school data, neighborhood surveys, and school climate surveys, and as such, are measures at the population level to explain population-level change. However, Promise Neighborhood should also collect *GPR*A indicators at the individual level in their case management systems to inform the design and implementation of interventions. That ongoing data collection at the individual level is necessary for internal performance management, allowing grantees to track impacts and outcomes in relation to specific Promise Neighborhood activities. Grantees are also required to submit these data in the [Promise Neighborhood Restricted-Use Data Files](#).

In addition, the FY11 and FY12 grantee target setting process showed many grantees do not have evidence of expected impacts of their solutions. The performance management using individual-level *GPR*A indicators will help build such an evidence base of a Promise Neighborhood’s solutions.

The population versus individual-level *GPR*A data collection is also discussed in Chapter 5 (specifically, p. 131) of the [Guidance Document](#). Collecting specific *GPR*A performance indicators in the case management system is discussed at the end of each *GPR*A section in Chapter 4.

## Target setting on *GPRA* indicators

**Question: Are FY11 grantees allowed to change targets submitted in Data Plans to the Department?**

**Answer:** No, the targets FY11 grantees submitted are final for the 5-year grant period with regard to APR tracking and reporting. The same will be true when FY12 grantees submit final baselines and targets (deadline to be determined). However, the Department acknowledges that target setting will be an iterative process throughout implementation. **The Department expects that FY11 and FY12 sites will analyze and review the established targets each year as more performance data becomes available as part of their own, internal review processes.** Sites may also wish to report targets to their community on different populations than those submitted to the Department (such as for only residents in the footprint) or to track targets that reflect the grantees goals beyond Promise Neighborhood requirements.

**Question: How should Promise Neighborhoods account for the high degree of uncertainty in setting target on *GPRA* indicators?**

The Department recognizes that grantees may not have all information necessary to set targets based on evidence about solutions being put into place and using realistic assessment of the impact they will have on the *GPRA* population over the course of the grant. There are also likely to be factors outside of grantees control present in the wider environment through the performance period that will impact targets. To account for such uncertainty, **ranges are encouraged as a target-setting option** for indicators with little or no previous performance data and highly uncertain future values. See the [Promise Neighborhood Target Setting Guidance](#) (p. 5) for guidance on how to set ranges. One approach might be to set the low end of the range as a realistically attainable goal and the high end as a stretch or aspirational goal.

**Question: How should Promise Neighborhoods set targets if there is no evaluation or good estimate of the impact for a particular solution?**

**Answer (short):** Sites should make some estimate of program effects, even if it is just a “best guess.” Program impact assumptions should be clearly documented so that it is possible to discuss differences between targets and actual program performance.

**Answer (long):** The Urban Institute’s [Promise Neighborhood Target Setting Guidance](#) (p. 6) recommends that sites “estimate the impact of effort on outcomes to provide an initial estimate of targets” and further suggests reviewing “the findings and recommendation from any recent program evaluations to identify past performance levels.” We understand that it may not be possible to have reliable estimates of impacts for all solutions, particularly for new or innovative solutions. Nevertheless, sites do need to make some estimate of program effects, even if it is just a “best guess.” Another source of information to consider is the outcomes achieved by similar organizations or under various conditions, and to use that as a benchmark. In addition, sites can use the judgment of partners as well as local and national experts to come up with reasonable assumptions about program effects.

Regardless of the approach, the important thing is to **document assumptions made about program impacts** so that, when later explaining the actual performance relative to the previously set targets, it is possible to discuss the difference in terms of predicted versus actual program performance. For example, a solution was expected to increase the likelihood of a child having a medical home by 50 percent, but in actuality only increased it 25 percent in the first year, this provides a crucial piece of information for telling the story about progress toward achieving this result.

Over time, sites can use their case management data to develop more accurate estimates of program impacts. For the purposes of APR reporting to the Department, sites will have to set final targets for all years of their grant and will not be able to revise these targets once they are set. **That does not prevent sites from developing revised targets for their own communication and accountability purposes, however, based on updated and more accurate data.** Even though it is not permitted as part of the APR reporting requirements, we encourage sites to revisit their target setting every year and update targets based on the latest performance data.

**Question: What are the recommended approaches for measuring progress on *GPRA 4* (students at or above grade level in math and English) in the face of changing assessment procedures taking place because of the shift to Common Core standards?**

**Answer:** Based on past experience, sites should expect that, following a change in assessments, measures of academic proficiency will drop in the first year but then rise again in subsequent years. **This shift needs to be taken into account when setting targets and reporting results for *GPRA 4*.** The Urban Institute will work with the Department to see if we can provide further guidance on how sites should report on and take into account changes related to the switch to Common Core assessments.

### Commonly reviewed data collection and reporting documents and tools

**Question: Should Promise Neighborhoods send Urban Institute materials on neighborhood and school surveys? When should this be done?**

**Answer:** The Urban Institute recommends that grantees send all neighborhood and school climate survey related materials far enough in advance of fielding dates to allow for feedback. This will allow the Urban Institute to review the materials to ensure they are aligned with recommendations provided in Chapter 7 of the [Guidance Document](#) and reporting expectations from the Department of Education. Important survey materials include questionnaires, sampling design, survey training documents, pre-survey notifications or invitations, fielding strategy and quality control mechanisms, and other materials developed by the Promise Neighborhood or a contracted survey firm.

**Question: What other data related materials can Urban Institute review?**

**Answer:** In addition to neighborhood and school climate survey materials, Urban Institute commonly reviews intake and enrollment forms, consent documents, partner data sharing agreements, IRB submissions, and other forms or agreements related to meeting Department of Education reporting requirements. Some materials, such as consent forms, may require further review by the Department. The Urban Institute is available to facilitate obtaining Department review of such materials, in consultation with the grantee.

**Miscellaneous**

**Question: Can Promise Neighborhoods collect data on students from previous school years once consent is received?**

**Answer:** Consent to disclose school or other data can apply to both past and future data collected on an individual. If the consent forms are worded appropriately, Promise Neighborhoods can collect data from previous years (such as test scores and attendance) and all future years.

Furthermore, there is no specific required time limit on consent (such as one year) required by *FERPA* or *HIPAA*. Urban Institute included the following language in the [Guidance Document's](#) model consent form (p. 246):

*This Consent Agreement is valid for the duration of the [Promise Neighborhood name] initiative. I maintain the right to discontinue this permission at any time by contacting the [Promise Neighborhood name] at [contact information].*

The person giving consent must have the right to revoke that consent at any time. Otherwise, there is not a need to “renew” the consent a regular intervals.

Consent procedures are subject to IRB review, however, and IRBs may decide to impose additional requirements on grantees collecting consent than those described above. Consent and data disclosure requirements may also be affected by state and local regulations and by specific provisions in data sharing agreements.

**Question: What is the difference between “program indicators” and “project indicators”?**

**Answer:** Program indicators are indicators that the Department will use only for research and evaluation purposes and for which an applicant is not required to propose solutions. Project indicators are indicators for which an applicant proposes solutions intended to result in progress on the indicators. The Promise Neighborhoods NOFA designated *GPRAs* 1–7 as both program and project indicators; *GPRAs* 8–15 are designated only as program indicators. (See tables 1 and 2, respectively, of p. 39619 in the NOFA. This designation of the *GPRAs* is also provided in appendix 4.1 of the [Guidance Document.](#)) Grantees may choose, however, to

designate any of *GPRAs* 8–15 as project indicators by proposing solutions for them. If solutions were proposed in the proposal, then the Department expects that these *GPRAs* will be considered as project indicators and that the grantee will produce results on those *GPRAs* indicators.

**Questions: How should Promise Neighborhoods collect family roster data?**

**Answer:** Promise Neighborhoods are recommended to collect family roster data (information on each person in a participant’s household) through two sources. The data should be collected through the case management system for all families of enrolled Promise Neighborhood participants and updated annually. The [Guidance Document](#) (pp. 125–127) describes how to collect a family roster through the case management system. In the case management system, you should be able to create a link between family member records (child and parent, for example), as described. The easiest way to compile family roster information is through a central enrollment process (Guidance Document, pp 118–119).

**Promise Neighborhoods are also encouraged to collect family roster data in their neighborhood survey.** This is to make weighting survey results by population easier, and lead to more accurate and useful data.