



Guidelines for Implementation of the Family Evaluation of Bereavement Services Survey (FEBS)

I. Introduction

NHPCO is committed to providing hospices with the means to receive feedback and compare their performance to nationally representative data as a mechanism for ensuring quality of care. An important part of that process is the development of performance measures that provide useful, meaningful, and actionable data. The Family Evaluation of Bereavement Services (FEBS) survey was developed by NHPCO to assist hospice programs to evaluate and improve the quality of their bereavement services.

The Family Evaluation of Bereavement Services (FEBS) survey was designed with the assistance of survey research specialists at the University of Massachusetts and in consultation with a team of experienced hospice professionals with a high level of expertise in delivery of bereavement services in the hospice setting. The survey has undergone cognitive and field testing, as well as multiple revisions, and is now ready for implementation by hospice providers. In addition to the survey, NHPCO provides online data submission and comparative reporting of results for hospices to use in their quality assessment and performance improvement efforts.

The FEBS survey is designed to evaluate bereavement services from the perspective of the recipients of the services.

The survey is based on the assumptions that bereavement services:

- a) are intended to match the bereaved person's need for support, while recognizing that not all individuals will have the same needs; and
- b) have the goal of assisting the bereaved person to manage the impact of loss.

The survey design also takes into account that hospices offer services based on their particular experience and resources, and that this, in turn, creates wide variation in the number and nature of bereavement services offered by hospices. The survey takes a comprehensive approach by including questions on a wide range of services, with instructions to respondents to skip those questions that do not pertain to their experience with bereavement services.

Because the quality of a bereavement program cannot be evaluated based on where its clients are in the grieving process, the survey does not include an assessment of respondents' progress. While grief assessment may be useful for bereavement staff in screening and planning interventions for individual clients, individual grief assessment has little utility in reporting and interpreting comparative program evaluation data at the national level. A screening question has been included, however, to identify persons who may need additional follow-up and assistance.



II. Data Collection

PREPARATION

Survey

The survey is available for download from the FEBS page of the NHPCO website, www.nhpc.org/FEBS. From the FEBS page, select the link labeled FEBS Survey.

NHPCO strongly recommends that the survey be used in exactly the same form as it is presented on the FEBS Web page. This means that:

- the number and order of the pages of the survey should not be changed;
- questions should not be dropped;
- the order of the pages should not be changed;
- the order of questions within a page should not be changed; and
- the wording of the questions should not be changed.

The survey is designed to be printed back-to-back (duplex) in order to minimize the total number of pages. When making copies of the survey, print pages 1 through 6 back-to-back. This means that page 2 will appear on the back of page 1, page 4 will appear on the back of page 3, and page 6 will appear on the back of page 5. The back of the survey cover page and the back of the last page (page 7) will be blank.

IMPORTANT: Staple the survey along the spine using two or more staples so that it opens like a book. This will make the survey easier for the respondents to handle and increase the likelihood they will complete all of the pages. Using multiple staples along the spine to create a booklet produces a more user-friendly survey and will result in a higher rate of return.

Cover Letter

The cover letter that accompanies any survey is important and may have a significant influence on the number of surveys that are completed and returned. A sample cover letter is provided as part of the survey materials. This letter may be used as is or modified, or you may create your own. [Click here to access the sample cover letter.](#)

Including a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) is also highly recommended. However, if the SASE is not included, be sure to delete the sentence: "Please return the survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope" if you use the sample cover letter.



SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

NHPCO recommends that the FEBS survey be mailed. The FEBS survey was designed and tested as a mailed survey, and it may not yield the same results if administered by telephone. NHPCO also recommends mailing the FEBS survey during the 14th month post-death. For example, if the death occurred in March 2006, bereaved family members will reach their 13 month post-death anniversary in April of 2007. The FEBS survey should be mailed to these individuals in May 2007.

This recommendation is based on the NHPCO Standards of Practice for Hospice Programs which specify that bereavement services be provided for a minimum of 13 months following the death of the patient. Sending the survey during the 14th month post-death allows for evaluation of services provided through the 13th month. However, individual hospice programs may differ in the length of time bereavement services are offered and the timing of the survey mailing can be adjusted accordingly.

NHPCO recommends sending the survey to individuals 21 years of age or older who:

- received hospice bereavement services of any type (including mailings) AND
- were eligible for services because a family member or friend died while enrolled in a hospice program AND
- have reached the 13th month anniversary after the death of the family member or friend who received hospice care



III. Data Submission

DART SYSTEM

When surveys are returned, data submission can begin. Data submission is done online through DART (Data Analysis and Reporting Tools) on the NHPCO Web site. The DART System is the portal for data submission and report retrieval for the FEBS survey.

How to log onto DART

The DART system can be accessed by clicking on the link labeled [NHPCO DART System](#) on the FEBS page of the NHPCO Web site (www.nhpc.org/FEBS). After clicking the link for DART, the login screen will pop up. Enter your hospice's Provider ID and password. The next screen is the DART homepage.

NOTE: Accessing the DART system requires a **Provider ID and Password**. Each hospice is assigned its own ID and password by NHPCO. The Provider ID and password are linked to your hospice and are used only to access DART. The Provider ID and password are NOT the same as your individual member ID/password.

*If you do not know your hospice's **Provider ID** and password, please contact NHPCO Member Services at 800-646-6460.*

WEB-BASED DATA ENTRY

Step 1: Access the FEBS Data Entry System

The data entry system can be accessed by the following path:

- ▶ Log onto DART
- ▶ From the DART Home page, click on [Family Evaluation of Bereavement Services](#)
- ▶ Click on [NHPCO Web-based Data Entry System](#)

Step 2: Complete Contact and Program Information Page

This page must be completed the first time you enter data using the data entry system and should be revised if any of your profile information changes. The data entry system will not permit moving to the next section until the required contact information has been entered. Each time you access the FEBS section of DART review your entered information to ensure your hospice program and contact information are accurate.

The information will be used to populate your report with your hospice name and your state for state level comparison reporting. This information is also required for NHPCO to contact you for any system updates and alerts. *Accuracy is important!*

After entering your contact information, click on "Save Contact Information" which takes you to a review page. Review the entered information for accuracy, then click "Continue" to proceed to the data entry system.



Number of Surveys Mailed

The last box on the Contact and Program Information page is the space for entering the total number of surveys mailed out for the current reporting period. The number entered should represent the number of surveys mailed in the half year for which you are entering data.

This number is used to calculate the return rate for your hospice for the current reporting period. You should enter the number of surveys mailed on an ongoing basis, making periodic updates each time you enter new data. Be sure to update this number before the data submission deadline. *Your response rate will not be accurate on your report if this number is not correct.*

NOTE: When entering the number of surveys mailed in the online data submission system, do not count surveys that were returned by the Post Office because they were undeliverable.

Step 3: Enter Survey Responses

Online survey software is used for entering and submitting FEBS survey data. Survey responses are entered just as they appear on the FEBS survey. Data entry and submission are combined into the same process so data are saved in the FEBS database as they are entered.

To enter survey data, click on the response on the screen that matches the response on the survey for each question. If the respondent has left the question blank, choose "No Answer."

Complete one online survey for each of your returned surveys. When you have completed the last page of the online survey, clicking the "Next" button takes you to a review page where you can check your entered responses. If you are entering more surveys, click the "Enter Another Survey" button. When you are done entering surveys, close your browser to end your session.

For each survey you enter, you must first:

- a. Enter your Provider ID.
This is the same ID you use to access the DART system. **Note: Your Provider ID must be entered accurately with each and every survey to ensure that your surveys are correctly associated with your hospice.**
- b. Enter a Respondent Number.
This is a unique number you assign to the survey. Surveys may be numbered in order (starting with "1, 2, 3" and so on) or a number can be used that is meaningful for your hospice. Do not duplicate Respondent Numbers. A different number must be entered for each survey.

Features of the Data Entry System

Write-in Comments

The FEBS offers the option for respondents to write in comments at the end of the survey. The data entry system does not provide space for submitting write-in responses because these responses are not part of the analysis or comparisons that appear in the FEBS report. However, the comments can be valuable to hospices for various activities such as tracking errors in care delivery or as a source of favorable quotes for use in promotional materials. Therefore, saving write-in responses and comments by copying them to a separate document is recommended.



Survey ID

The online system assigns a unique survey ID to each survey. After you have entered responses for a survey, the Survey ID assigned is displayed on the review page. Each survey you enter will be assigned a different Survey ID. **Write the assigned Survey ID on each of your surveys.** The Survey ID is needed to keep track of your entered surveys.

Skip Patterns

The FEBS survey instructs respondents skip certain questions on the survey. Whether questions should be answered depends on the response to the previous, or “parent” question. If a survey has responses to questions that should have been skipped, these responses should not be submitted. The data entry screen is configured to “gray out” questions that should be skipped, preventing inappropriate data entry

For example, if the response to question 4 is NO, indicating that the hospice did not stay in touch with the survey respondent by mail, the FEBS survey instructs the respondent to skip the next three questions. These questions should be skipped because they ask about how well the hospice did in keeping in touch by mail, and for a respondent that did not receive mailings, these questions would not be relevant.

The following FEBS survey questions have skip instructions for NO responses:

4 – Hospice contact by mail

10 – Calls to hospice

14 – In person bereavement visits

DATA SUBMISSION DEADLINES

There are two data submission and reporting periods for the FEBS survey each year. Reports are created biannually, covering the first and second halves of the calendar year, and are made available two weeks after each data submission deadline. The deadline for data submission includes a two week grace period between the end of each half year and the data submission deadline.

Data submission deadlines and system blackout dates are posted for the entire year on the FEBS page of the NHPCO Web site (www.nhpc.org/FEBS). Data submission deadlines and report availability dates remain the same each year and are as follows:

	<u>Data Submission Deadline</u>	<u>Report Available</u>
1 st Half	July 15	August 1
2nd Half	January 15	February 1

Note: For 2007, the first reporting period will include surveys received by the hospice through June 30, 2007, regardless of the date that use of the FEBS survey was implemented.



IV. FEBS REPORT

FEBS semiannual reports are accessed through the DART system. They can be accessed by the following path:

- ▶ Log onto DART from the FEBS page of the NHPCO Web site (www.nhpco.org/FEBS)
- ▶ Click on Family Evaluation of Bereavement Services
- ▶ Click on the link for a specific half of the year

Note: The format of the FEBS report is currently under development. This section of the Guidelines will be completed and a sample report will be posted on the FEBS Web page in the near future.

V. General Information

HELP

NHPCO has created a dedicated email address (FEBS@nhpco.org) for questions related to any aspect of the FEBS survey process. Because it will be checked regularly, the FEBS email is the most efficient way to get assistance with FEBS issues and questions. Even if you would prefer to discuss your question via a phone call, we request that you first send an email requesting that someone call you. The FEBS email address is: FEBS@nhpco.org.

TIMING

Hospices may begin using the FEBS survey and participating in benchmarking at any time. The schedule of data submission deadlines for each half year is posted on the FEBS page of the NHPCO Web site. *The deadlines are final.* No data can be submitted after a deadline has passed.

For reporting purposes, the data analyzed in the semiannual report come from surveys RECEIVED in the half year covered by the report. For example, data submitted for the 1st reporting period are from surveys that hospices receive from January 1 through June 30.

TIPS TO IMPROVE RESPONSE RATES

The following are several practices that hospices have successfully employed to improve their response rates:

- Cover letter explaining how the information gained from the client's response is used for quality improvement. [Click here to see a sample cover letter.](#)
- Personalized note with the cover letter from a staff or volunteer that had direct contact with the family.
- Pre-addressed stamped envelope to return survey to hospice
- Print the survey on colored paper to draw attention to it. Be sure to choose a light color that does not make the survey difficult to read.

If you have a tip that has helped your response rate that you would like to share, please send an email to FEBS@NHPCO.org.