

GAIN-Q

Global Appraisal of Individual Needs-Quick: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version 2.5

July 15, 2005

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This document was prepared under Center for Substance Abuse Treatment contract no. 277-00-6504. The questions and answers build on work and issues raised by several clinicians and researchers without whom this document would not be possible. We would like to thank them for their assistance in preparing this document.

Questions and Answers on the GAIN-Q

Below is a set of questions, answers, and comments on the GAIN-Q instrument. The information is arranged in two sections: 1) general questions, and 2) questions on specific GAIN items.

General Questions

Long list of symptoms

- Q: Do you have to read the entire list of symptoms before the participant can answer? (Ex: For item EH1c, “During the past 12 months, have you had significant problems with...feeling very trapped, lonely, sad, blue, depressed, or hopeless about the future?”), do you have to read all the symptoms before the participant can answer?
- A: If the participant says “Yes” before you finish reading the item, go ahead and circle “1” for “Yes”. However, if the participant interrupts you and says “No” before you finish reading the list of symptoms, diplomatically tell the participant that you need to read the list of symptoms to the end of the sentence.

Repeating the stem

- Q: Do you have to keep repeating the stem for a list of grouped items? (Ex: “During the past 12 months...”)
- A: No - only if there has been an interruption (e.g., someone comes in the room, a side conversation) or for clarification. We suggest repeating the stem every few sub-items just to remind the participant of the appropriate time frame or other information in the stem.

Clarifying response format

- Q: For items that ask for a response format in “number of days” in the past 90, what should I do if the participant says “everyday”?
- A: Check out the meaning of “everyday” for the participant, thereby modeling the correct response format – for instance, does the adolescent mean every day for the past 3 months?, everyday during the week but not on weekends?, etc. For example, “So ‘everyday’ as in everyday of the full week for the full 90 days?” If this is correct, record 90 days. If not, clarify further and code.

Verbatim field and Notes field

- Q: For verbatim lines or to add comments, how much space is there in both fields to record any additional information?
- A: For verbatim fields, there is space for 40 characters - any text greater than that has to be entered into the Notes field. You just click on Notes and continue writing the comments - there is no limit to the number of characters or text that you can enter in this field and it can be printed out in a separate document.
- Q: In many cases when administering an assessment via paper-and-pencil, I jot down a lot of side information and notes. How can I make sure that all of this information gets entered?
- A: When writing notes, please make sure it is very clear which item the note refers. Circle the notes if you want them to be keyed into the computer.

Participation in AA/NA

- Q: Where should attendance at Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous be recorded?
- A: We do not currently collect this information (nor does GPRA). It is not a form of treatment, but support. If the participant happens to mention it, if you want to, you could record it in one of the optional fields.

Shelf Life of Data

- Q: How long after you administer a GAIN-Q assessment is the data still valid to import into the GAIN-I?
- A: The data should be imported within a week - up to ten days as an upper bound - after the assessment was administered. After that, it will need to be readministered.

Excel Spread Sheet

- Q: To enter data in the GAIN-Q Excel Spread Sheet, I always get a message asking if I want to enable or disable macros or to just cancel. What button should I press?
- A: In this case, always choose the Enable Macros button.
- Q: In the GAIN-Q Excel Spread Sheet there is a link that says "Click here to clear and save data". When I clicked it, it did not move the entered data over into the database. I did not enable the macros when prompted. Did this happen because I didn't enable the macros?
- A: Yes - the button did not work because the macros were not enabled. If you do not enable the macros, you won't be able to run the scoring program.

Questions on Specific Items

Item BK4

Q: Do we need to ask, “gender” if it’s obvious?

A: No.

Item BK5

Q: In item BK5, the list of races and ethnicities all require a Yes or No response. Do we have to ask each race and ethnicity?

A: It is certainly fine to ask every race/ethnicity. However, another option would be to ask the question and then circle “Yes” for each race and/or ethnicity mentioned. If you go this route, make sure you “probe to the null”, that is, ask “Are there any others?” until the participant says “No”.

Item BK6b

Q: Regarding item BK6b (“Who has custody of you?”), should we document whom the adolescent lives with or who makes the adolescent’s decisions? They may be different for the same adolescent.

A: Note that there is a difference between legal *custody* and legal *guardianship*. Legal custody is who you live with, while legal guardianship is who makes your decisions. Yes, sometimes they can be different for the same adolescent. Although the item is not written this way, the response to the item should document *legal guardianship*, or who makes the adolescent’s decisions.

Item BK6b

Q: For the item about custody, do we record the name of the person(s) or the relationship(s)?

A: Record the relationship(s), not the name(s).

Item BK6b

Q: Most of our group home tract kids (95%) we screen are wards of the juvenile court or their custodial arrangement is under judicial review or pending. The court often tells the family that whether or not they will retain custody is dependent on how the kid does if they go through a treatment program. However, most of these adolescents identify their parent as having custody. They almost never identify the court, county, or state. This is because the kids themselves are not really clear on the differences between guardianship and custody, and even with interviewer attempts to probe and clarify they really don’t know who has custody. So in these instances, the adolescent’s self-report contradicts what we find in our review of the adolescent’s chart. What should we do with contradictory information like this?

A: For this item, assuming the information in the chart is more reliable than the adolescent’s self-report, update the information recorded on the GAIN-Q to what you have learned from the chart. Make a note in the Notes field for that item in the data entry program that documents the source of the information.

Item BK6b

Q: Suppose an adolescent participant answers that her biological parent and stepparent have custody of her. Do we write in both?

A: Technically, this item taps guardianship – who makes decisions for the participant. Clarify with the participant to make sure she understands that this item gets at decision-making rights rather than who she currently lives with. If she answers that both have the legal right to make her decisions, write in both relationships. If the participant is not sure, write in “not sure”.

Item BK7

Q: This item is worded “What is the highest grade of education you have completed?” So does this mean, for instance, that if a kid is in 7th grade, then we would record 6th grade since he has completed the 6th grade (even though he is now in the 7th grade)?

A: Yes, that is correct.

Item BK7

Q: How do you code years of college completed?

A: For completion of years of higher education, code as follows:

13.....1 year completed (freshman year at college/university, 1 year at community college)

14.....2 years completed (sophomore year at college/university, 2 years at community college – possibly an Associates degree)

15.....3 years completed (junior year at college/university, 2 years at community college and 1 year at college/university)

16.....4 years completed (senior year at college/university, 2 years at community college and 2 years at college/university)

Etc.....

Item BK7

Q: This item is worded “What is the highest grade of education you have completed?” What if the adolescent is home-schooled? Does home-schooling count?

A: Yes. Home schooled students complete curriculum that is associated with grade levels. Record completed home schooling grades as you would any other schooling. If the adolescent doesn’t know, put “DK”.

Item BK7a

Q: Suppose in item BK7a we learn that the participant has earned a GED. Should we go back to item BK7 and fill in grade "12"?

A: No. Item BK7 is the actual grade the participant has completed. A participant can complete, say, 3rd grade or 8th grade in BK7, but in BK7a he could have completed a GED.

Item BK8a

Q: Suppose the adolescent has indeed previously completed the GAIN-Q but can’t remember when. What should we record for this item?

A: There are a number of strategies to follow. First, check to see if the date is on file. If you

cannot find it or are unsure of it, then help the adolescent try to remember the date by offering memory prompts – for instance, what was going on at or around that time, what season was it, why was she taking the GAIN-Q, etc. If this doesn't help and the adolescent really doesn't know, there are a number of "rules" to follow for estimating dates. To estimate the month, use the "March-July-October" rule. That is, if the last GAIN-Q was completed early in the year, use March, if the middle of the year, use July, and if the end of the year, use October. To estimate a day, use the "5-15-25" rule. Use 5 if the interview took place at the beginning of the month, 15 if during the middle, and 25 if during the end of a month. To estimate a year, make the best approximation based on the adolescent's age or other information.

Item GF1d

- Q: This item says "In your lifetime, have you been stopped by the police or arrested 5 or more times?" Does it mean the participant has been stopped by the police at least 1 time and/or arrested at least 5 times?
- A: Yes.

Items GF2e-h

- Q: I interviewed a 13 year old today who has never held a paid job. When it came to items 2e-h on work, I wasn't sure how to code them. Should they be skipped or coded "NA" in the column or what?
- A: Code them "No". If there is concern that the total score on the General Factors Index will be artificially deflated because these items do not apply to a given adolescent, add a note off to the side or in the Additional Comments section. Do not skip the item or just write NA off to the side. If it does not apply, circle "No".

Item GF3j

- Q: Item GF3j asks how many days (in the past 90) a youth lived in a place where he was not free to come and go as he pleased, like a jail, an inpatient program, or a hospital. If the youth was on electronic monitoring or house arrest during the past 90 days, does this time get counted in GF3j?
- A: No. What you are getting at in this item is the number of days a youth was in a controlled environment in order to get an idea as to how much of the time he couldn't (or wasn't supposed to) use even if he had wanted to. If a youth is on electronic monitoring or house arrest, he is still free to use. Although technically the item sounds like it could include days on house arrest or on electronic monitoring, the item response should not include those days.

Item SS1c

- Q: In this item, the only relationships noted that cause stress are marriage, divorce, and separation. Are we supposed to include only these relationships? They typically don't apply to our kids.
- A: The relationships noted are just examples. Some other examples that would be pertinent to adolescents are breaking up with a boyfriend/girlfriend, brothers and sisters being separated due to placement in different foster homes, fighting with best friend, etc.

Item PH1

Q: During a recent GAIN-Q administration, I asked item PH1 and the participant answered “Excellent”. Now I know from other sources that this participant has Crohn’s disease. Should I have raised this and asked her to reconsider her answer?

A: No. This item is qualitative in nature and typically measures how a person feels relative to how she has felt in the past. Thus someone with a history of Crohn’s disease or any other disease or condition might rate herself as feeling “excellent” during the past 12 months if her condition has not been bothering her, even though objectively she is not completely healthy.

Item PH3a

Q: Under the Physical Health Section (“During the past 12 months, have you lost or gained 10 or more pounds when you were not trying to?”). When an administrator interviewed 7th and 8th grade students, the majority responds, “Yes” to this item. When he tried to clarify, it turns out they answered this way because have gone through growth spurts and changes. Does answering this “Yes” because of physical maturation make any difference in the results on the GAIN-Q?

A: Reporting this symptom alone would not put the participant into a problem range - it would only if it coincided with other health problems or complaints. Although growth spurts explain this answer, they may also create other health problems, particularly for kids on medication where their dosage may need to be adjusted because of the same growth spurt.

Item BH5c.

Q: When counting the number of days in the past 90 he is involved in any activities he thought might get him into trouble or be against the law, should the participant include days of drug use?

A: No. *Do not include* days restricted to the *use* of drugs. However, *do include* days related to drug *activities* (selling, etc.).

Item BH5c

Q: This item asks for the last time the participant did anything that could have gotten him into trouble or been against the law *besides using drugs*. I know we don’t count using drugs, but what about getting caught using drugs? What about selling drugs? What kind of alcohol- or drug-related crime counts for this question?

A: Do not include “getting caught using drugs”, but do include “selling drugs”. Count any alcohol or drug-related activities that go beyond simple possession or use, e.g., dealing or driving under the influence.

Item SR1

Q: Item SR1 is a skip-out item that asks whether the adolescent used alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, or other substances during the past 12 months. If the adolescent answers “Yes”, he continues to answer the rest of the items in the Substance-Related Issues section. If the adolescent answers “No”, the rest of the items in the SR section are skipped and the participant continues with items in the next section, Service Utilization. I recently interviewed an adolescent and when we got to this item, he

- answered “No”, but I knew full well that he was lying because his P.O. told me he recently got in trouble for using. What should I do in a situation like this?
- A: Although an interviewer is supposed to ask all pertinent items on the GAIN-Q, the situation you describe is one in which you may not ask it. If the interviewer has information from a reliable source that the participant has used within the past year (e.g., the participant recently failed a drug screen such as a urine or hair test, the participant was recently caught using, etc.), the interviewer may circle “Yes” to item 1 without asking it. While doing so, the interviewer should give an explanation for the action. For instance, “I am aware that you were caught using marijuana the other day, so I am going to mark that you have used alcohol or other drugs in the past year, okay?” Usually, this action and its explanation will reduce lying about use and the participant typically will go along with it. If the participant insists that he didn’t and hasn’t used in the past year, don’t argue about it. Circle “No” and skip to the Service Utilization section. Be sure to make a note of the interaction in the Case Disposition section under Additional Comments and in the Notes field for that item (if using the ABS).

Item SR4

- Q: The transitional statement that appears before item SR4 mentions behavior during a time period different than that anchored before beginning the GAIN-Q. Should we anchor this new time period before administering this item?
- A: Yes, after you read the transitional statement that introduces item SR4, anchor the time period for the last 90 days the adolescent lived in the community. Use the same technique you used when establishing the anchors for the “past 12 months” and “past 90 days” at the start of the administration.

Item SR4

- Q: The transitional statement and stem for item SR4 (“During the last 90 days that you lived in the community...”) specifically targets behavior while the adolescent was “living in the community” rather than behavior over a time period regardless of where the adolescent was living. Why are we asking for this information?
- A: The purpose of the item is to get estimates of typical use when the adolescent is free to use – that is, without the restrictions that living in a controlled environment could entail.

Item SR1

- Q: There are cases in which the interviewer has prior knowledge from a reliable source that the adolescent has used within the past year or recently came up positive for a drug screen. If the participant answers “no” to the question, the rest of the items in this section are skipped. How should the interviewer handle this situation so the rest of the data is collected?
- A: If the interviewer has reliable information, he may circle “yes” to item 1 without asking it. While doing so, the interviewer should give an explanation for the action. For instance, “I am aware that you were caught using marijuana the other day, so I am going to mark that you have used alcohol or other drugs in the past year, okay?” Usually, this action and its explanation will reduce lying. If the participant insists that he has not used, don’t argue about it. Circle “no” and skip to the Service Utilization section. Be sure to

make a note of the interaction in the Case Disposition section under “Additional Comments”.

Item SR4f

- Q: Item SR4f says, “During the last 90 days that you lived in the community, on how many days did you go without using any alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs?” Do you mean the total number of days out of 90, or the highest number of days in a row?
- A: Record the total number of days out of 90. It doesn’t matter if periods of abstinence are sprinkled among periods of use.

Item EN4

- Q: This item refers to the place that best describes where the form was completed. Where can I document juvenile detention?
- A: Code it under “prison, jail, or detention.”

Item CD1 – Referral Source(s)

- Q: We have a client who was self-referred to a counselor. The counselor then referred him to our program at the substance abuse center. For item CD1, would his referral source and corresponding code be “Self” or “Behavioral health provider”?
- A: Technically, a counselor referred him. However, bottom line he was referred by himself apparently because he has substance-related problems. Referral source should be “Self”. If you wanted to, you could record both “Self” and “Counselor” and add a note in the Additional Comments section (item 4) at the bottom of the page. If you are using ABS, you could record an explanation in the Notes fields for those items or a note in the Additional Comments section.

Item CD-s

- Q: One of the categories is “noncompliance.” What should be included in this item?
- A: Violating probation, parole, suspension, or other requirements.