



These tips are for team members within SHIP, SMP and MIPPA programs to help them gather demographic information from beneficiaries. This includes age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, primary language, and income.

1 **Start with good intentions.** It is important to remain open-minded. Do not assume that a person will be uncomfortable answering demographic questions. You might be surprised! Remember that these questions are designed to make sure everyone receives high quality support.

2 **Spend some time getting to know the person and building trust before asking the questions.**

- “What’s your name? Nice to meet you [their name]. Am I saying that right?”
- If you meet in-person: “Is this space OK for us to talk? Would you like to move to another space? Can I get you anything before we start?”
- Finally, if the person engages you in small talk, be responsive and open.

3 **Explain why you are asking the questions, what is going to be done with the responses, and give them the choice to opt out at any time.**

- “What I am going to ask you may seem a little personal. We ask everyone the same questions. We don’t want to make assumptions. We want to make sure we do a good job serving everyone.”
- “Your responses are confidential. They won’t have any impact on your services or your service eligibility. We will never report your individual responses.”
- “It is your choice whether to respond. If there is a question that makes you uncomfortable, you don’t have to answer.”

4 **Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues to identify if you may need to adjust your language or take a pause.** Provide additional information and explain terms in simpler language if beneficiaries are confused. If beneficiaries seem overwhelmed, ask if they need a short break or if they want to come back and do this another time. Remember, beneficiaries can skip a question if they don’t want to answer it for any reason.

5 **Express gratitude and encourage follow-up.** Thank the beneficiary for their time and being willing to share this information. Let them know how to contact you if they have any additional questions.
