

## NATURAL HISTORY INTERVIEW (NHI) “DYNAMIC” SEGMENT

### A brief explanation

This document covers only the “Dynamic” segment of the Natural History Interview (NHI) Schedule. The dynamic forms (6, 9-11, and 13-19) are designed to get a complete picture of the drug use history of the respondent as well as information on events that might have shaped or been shaped by the drug use. They collect longitudinal data on drug and alcohol use, crime and delinquency, incarcerations, work, as well as treatment episodes, both medical and drug related. The “dynamic” part of the interview consist of the repeated administration of these forms according to the segmentation rules, discussed later.

The following is a brief explanation of the rationale behind the development and administration of this interview schedule:

It is well known that drug use is often heaviest just before entry into treatment, so reliable pre/post comparison must be based on long-term pattern of use. It is not feasible to collect lifetime drug use data on a monthly basis, but people can reliably recall overall levels of drug use and related behavior within time segments marked by major life changes, such as arrests, incarcerations, marriages, treatment episodes, etc. These data can be used to reconstruct long-term behavior patterns and to determine what sort of effect the latest treatment episode had on those patterns. Second, natural history data are important for distinguishing drug-user pattern (e.g., sequential use of different primary drugs versus polydrug users). Treatment effects cannot be fully understood without knowledge of how the respondents’ recent drug use fits into their longer trajectories of drug use, abstinence, natural recovery, and treatment assisted recovery.

The segmenting procedure is as follow: Interviewers begin by establishing exact or approximate dates of initiation into drug use, any later changes in use, criminal behavior, arrests, incarcerations, treatment episodes, and so on. These dates are recorded on a calendar, the timeline, which provides a simple, visual record by which behavior and status changes are segmented. One form is completed for each segment. Events marked on the timeline are also used as aids to recall.

Complete instructions for conducting the NHI, including segmenting procedures and rules as well as instructions for filling out the forms are included in the specifications.