# Guide to Data Collection Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Advantage(s)</th>
<th>Disadvantage(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Survey**             | Standardized written instruments that can be administered by mail, email or in person | • Cost  
                         |                                                      | • No opportunities for clarification  
                         |                                                      | • Response rates               |
| **Interview**          | Standardized instruments conducted person-to-person either in person or over the telephone | • Complexity of questions  
                         |                                                      | • Cost  
                         |                                                      | • Fewer respondents  
                         |                                                      | • Reliability                  |
| **Focus Group**        | Particular type of interview conducted with a small group of people to obtain information in a defined area of interest | • Group dynamic  
                         |                                                      | • Generalizability                |
| **Observation**        | Systematic inspection of individual behaviors or interactions among individuals, of events or of physical conditions within a site or facility | • Validity                                   | • Time  
                         |                                                      | • Training                     |
| **Record Review**      | Systematic collection of needed data from internal, organizational records or official records collected by other groups or institutions | • Ease of data collection                  | • Availability  
                         |                                                      | • Timeliness                    |
| **Anecdotes**          | Accounts of direct personal experience                                      | • Cost  
                         |                                                      | • Generalizability                |
|                        |                                                                            | • Unanticipated outcomes                    |                                           |