



INTRODUCING THE HSR&D CENTRALIZED TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES PROGRAM (CTSP)

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**Centralized
Transcription
Services Program**

POLL #1

How many participants are using, have received a budget to use, or are contemplating using the CTSP?

1. Currently using the service
2. Have a budget from CTSP to use the service
3. Do not have a budget, but are contemplating using the service



HISTORY OF THE CTSP

- HSR&D needed to address contract delays affecting transcription
 - Delays were leading to project modifications
- In Fiscal Year (FY)15 HSR&D funded a transcription and survey needs assessment to better understand the field's interests in having methodology services available behind the VA firewall
- Based on an investigator survey (N=173) and COIN AO survey (N=20) conducted at the VA Pittsburgh CHERP Center of Innovation (COIN), 80% of participants expressed interest in a Centralized Transcription Services Program

HISTORY OF THE CTSP

- FY15 Dr. Zickmund added transcription services to her CHERP-based qualitative core
- Spring FY16 her team was selected for a 6-month HSR&D Transcription Pilot
- Summer FY16 she moved to VA Salt Lake City IDEAS 2.0 COIN with a loss of her Pittsburgh team
- Fall FY16 Dr. Zickmund applied for the national Centralized Transcription Service Program award after moving to the VA Salt Lake City IDEAS 2.0 COIN
- October 1 2016 CTSP was established and hiring of staff began

SERVICES PROGRAM MODEL

- First HSR&D national Services Program (a different model than Resource Centers)
- 3 years of core funding with the goal of self-sufficiency after that time



SERVICES



Transcription services cover a wide range of qualitative research:

- One-on-one interviews
- Multi-person interviews (tracked and untracked)
- Focus groups (tracked and untracked)
- Observational recordings (e.g. provider-patient visit)

DETAILS

- Kim Bloom, MPH, is the Administrative Director
- 41 projects to date
- Since 10/1/16 over 700 hours of verbatim transcription complete
- New centralized e-mail address: CTSP@va.gov



TYPES OF VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION: NATURALIZED



- **Naturalized Transcription:**
Every utterance is captured in the transcript. The naturalized template includes all words, phrases, pauses, sounds, and any other component of the event that is captured on tape.

TYPE OF VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION: DE-NATURALIZED

- **De-naturalized Transcription:**
Utterances that do not contribute to the meaning of the conversation (e.g. “um,” “like,” “you know”) are edited out of the transcript to make a more readable text.



CTSP PROCESS

- All services housed within the VA firewall
- VA staff are granted access to local research drives
- All transcription is completed within that study's research server
- The CTSP has been deemed by the VA Salt Lake City IRB as “not human subjects research”
- This helps avoid VA Salt Lake City delays (and at times addresses local delays as well)

CTSP PROCESS

- CTSP requires no contracting
- Funds are distributed either via Central Office or (for local projects) via a VA to VA transfer



STEPS TO USING THE CTSP

- The project site creates a storage drive, giving access to CTSP personnel
- We provide a list of individuals needing access
- Once the storage drive has been created the project site sends the link to CTSP so we can check that we have access
- CTSP will add a “tracking sheet” and other transcription folders to the drive

STEPS TO USING THE CTSP

- When the project site uploads audio they will add file names and lengths to the “tracking sheet” and also alert CTSP that they’ve done so
- The transcriptionists transcribe the audio and store the transcription in their individual folder on that site’s local drive, also noting their progress on the tracking sheet
- The transcript is then verified and when complete, put in the verified folder
- Transcripts in the verified folder are complete

STEPS FOR INCLUDING CTSP IN PROPOSALS

From HSR&D RFA:

- Contact CTSP to receive a budget for service
- If not using the service, provide “in your budget justification a brief summary of the reason(s) for not utilizing the CTSP.”
- Include Susan Zickmund’s biosketch (no Other Support document)
- If VA Salt Lake City is not a site, add it as an additional site to the budget with Dr. Zickmund “listed as the site investigator who is responsible for the funds sent to and the work performed at SLC.”
- Dr. Zickmund’s percent effort is listed as “N/A” and her salary as “contributed”

STEPS FOR INCLUDING CTSP IN PROPOSALS

- If SLC is already a site, Dr. Zickmund “need not be listed as a site investigator if one already exists”
- Also list the “CTSP Transcription Services (SLC)” along with associated funds under “other direct costs” on the summary budget worksheet.
- Include a brief description of the CTSP quote in the written budget justification and if not using the CTSP include a brief summary of the reason for not utilizing it
- The CTSP budget does not need to be included as an Appendix.

SAMPLE BUDGET JUSTIFICATION LANGUAGE FOR CTSP

Please supply the project-specific details (below). This is the place to meet the VA HSR&D CO language request: “Include a brief description of the CTSP quote in the written budget justification.”

- HSR&D Centralized Transcription Service Program (CTSP) will provide all transcription services for this project. The CTSP is housed with the Veterans Health Administration Salt Lake City’s (VHASLC) Informatics, Decision-Enhancement and Analytic Sciences (IDEAS 2.0) Center of Innovation (COIN). The CTSP employs VA and/or Without Compensation (WOC) employees and all transcription occurs within the VA firewall. A total of _____ in transcription funds will be requested for ___ year(s) of the ____-year project.

SAMPLE BUDGET JUSTIFICATION LANGUAGE FOR DR. ZICKMUND

Susan Zickmund, PhD (no effort). Dr. Zickmund is a Research Scientist at the Veterans Health Administration Salt Lake City's (VHASLC) and the Director of the VA HSR&D-funded Centralized Transcription Services Program (CTSP). She is also the Associate Director of the Informatics, Decision-Enhancement and Analytic Sciences Center (IDEAS 2.0) Center for Innovation (COIN). She brings extensive experience in guiding qualitative data collection, transcription and analysis. She has worked with multiple investigators from many COINS and has supervised over several thousand hours of qualitative data collection and analysis, including transcription. She supervises the CTSP transcriptionists dedicated to producing verbatim transcriptions for research investigators as well as the CTSP coordinators who monitor the efficiency and the quality of all transcription services.

CTSP SUGGESTED IRB LANGUAGE

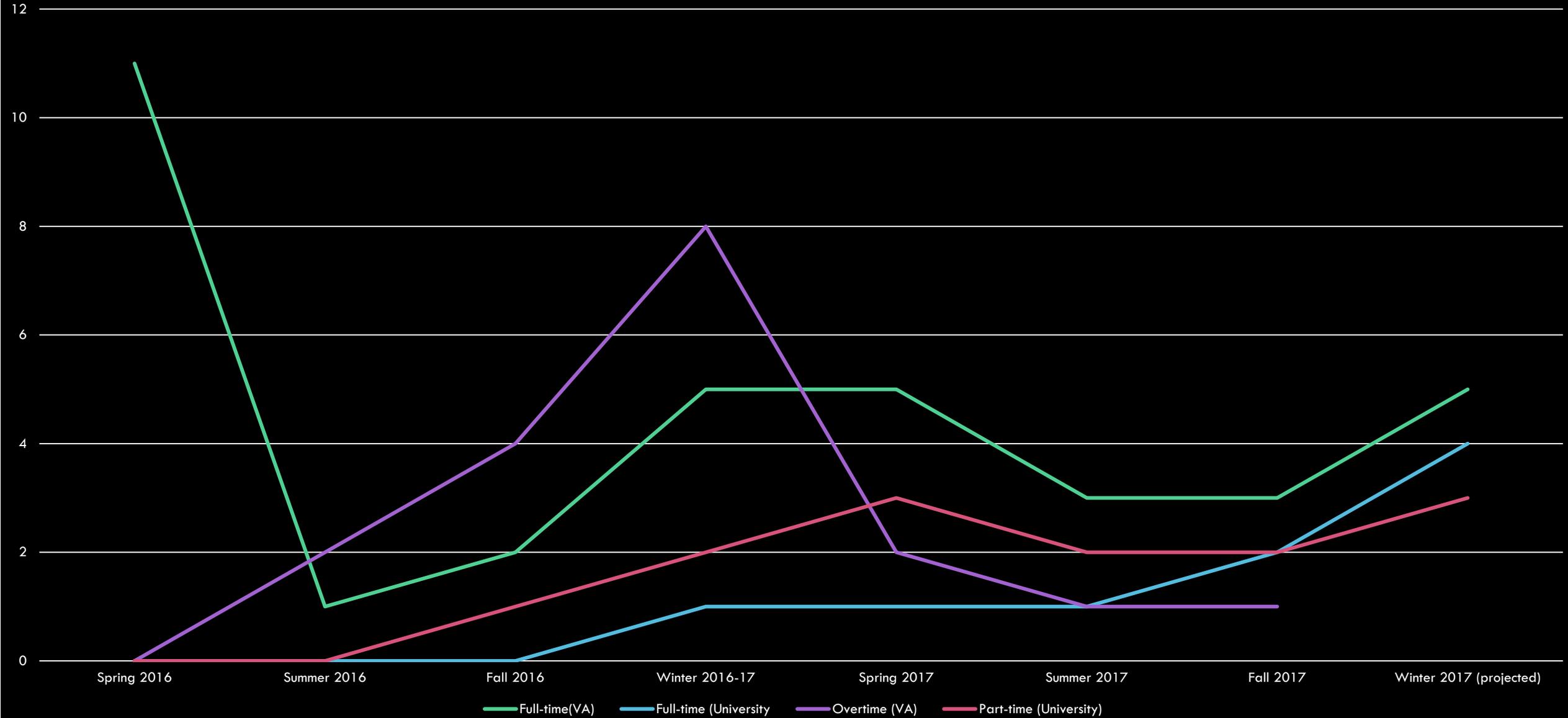
Approved staff from the VA Salt Lake City (VASLC) will transcribe the [name of study] audio files. The VASLC has a Professional Transcription Service available to VA sites and monitored by their own IRB. The [name of study] audio recordings to be transcribed by VASLC staff will be labeled by the subject's unique alphanumeric code and saved behind the VA Firewall in [name of study]'s secure shared project folder on [location of project share drive]. The VASLC transcription staff will be given access to a sub-folder within [name of study]'s secure project folder: [name of folder where audio files are located]. Approved study staff will place a copy of the audio files in this folder for an approved VASLC transcriptionist to access for the purposes of transcription. The VASLC transcriptionist will transcribe each interview verbatim and save the completed transcript in the sub-folder using the same alphanumeric code. No data (audio files, in process transcripts, or completed transcripts) will leave the [name of home VAMC] secure research server. As completed transcripts become available, approved study staff will move these files from the transcription sub-folder into another sub-folder that is only accessible to study staff, where they will be stored and accessed for qualitative analyses.

QUALITY

- Staff are trained to understand the transcription needs of qualitative researchers
- This process helps us to provide high quality focus group and interview transcripts
- We also extensively research VA terms and acronyms
- We also include a 100% verification process to help ensure that transcripts are accurate

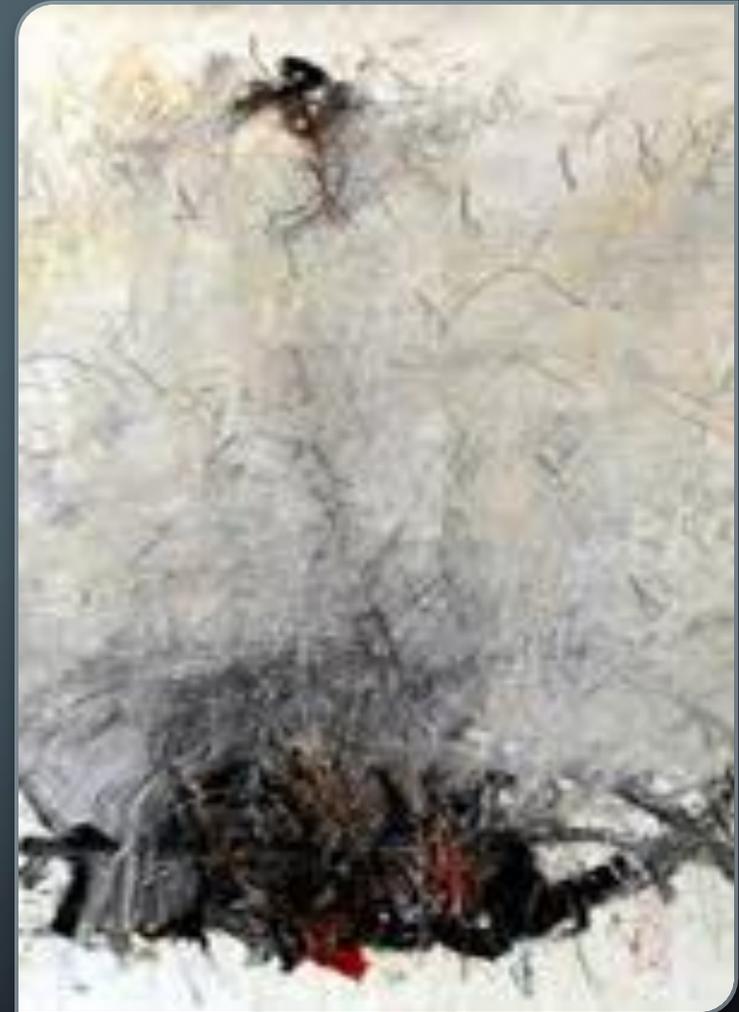
CHALLENGES/STAFFING

CTSP Employment Trends



CHALLENGES/STAFFING

- Open to discussing any way to augment VA staff that has been used successfully in the field
- Having a larger and also flexible staff who can be tapped when demands spike would be ideal



TURNAROUND TIME

- We organize transcription by the project
- A project must advance through the queue to be worked on
- With current staffing levels it takes ~two months for a project to move up the queue to be worked on
- Our CTSP goal is to have a larger staff for quick turnaround time
 - We need to take care not to be too large as excess staff would result in higher costs, resulting in added transcription costs

TURNAROUND TIME



The CTSP goal is to provide a two week turnaround on audio files once all administrative barriers to initiating a project are addressed

CHANGES TO PROMOTE EFFICIENCY AND FAIRNESS

- We are in the process of transitioning from a project-based queue system to an audio file system
- Currently we work on the oldest projects which often continue to add new audio files
- This system results in completion of files that are newer to the queue than those of other projects

CHANGES IN EFFICIENCY

We will move to a system where the oldest audio files are transcribed first regardless of where the project is in a queue



NEW WEBSITE

- We are working with CIDER to develop an official HSR&D CTSP website
- All forms—including request forms—will be available on the website
- Requests can be e-mailed from the site and will also be uploaded into a database
- We are also exploring whether we can provide a budget calculator so that investigators can work through various scenarios to determine the transcription budget that works for them

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLEAR AUDIO RECORDINGS



- Poor audio recordings lead to added costs for the research team and greater delays
- From our hundreds of hours of transcription we have developed tips for improving audio quality

AUDIO RECORDERS

- High quality audio recorders produce better audio files
- Expensive, high end recorders (~\$500) produce files that can be transcribed more easily, resulting in lower costs
- If the Center or the investigator is involved in many qualitative projects, investing in a quality audio recorder may be worth it

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLEAR AUDIO RECORDINGS

- Pilot test interviews or focus groups
- Listen to a piloted interview to see if both the interviewer and interviewee can be heard
- Avoid loud settings
 - Do not collect data in loud establishments like restaurants or bars or where there is loud noise/large crowds or children
 - Avoid rooms with echoes or with traffic noises

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLEAR AUDIO RECORDINGS

- Make certain with in-person interviews to place the recorder closer to the participant than the interviewer
- Train interviewers to project their voices and to speak clearly
- When conducting telephone interviews purchase an audio recorder telephone jack
 - The sound quality will be substantially better
- Listen to recordings as data is collected to avoid systemic problems

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLEAR AUDIO RECORDINGS

- For focus groups, use two audio recorders—one at each end of the table
- Avoid ordering food that makes noise during the focus groups (soda cans, cellophane wrapped sandwiches, chips)



AUDIO RECORDERS AND DATA SECURITY ISSUES

- Be aware that there are national issues with audio recorders
- New IT security standards may block the downloading of audio files
- A waiver from your local ISO to use your digital recorders may help you to address this
- Recorders that are **FIPS-140-2** compliant are likely allowed
- For further information contact Kristen Mattocks
(Kristen.mattocks@va.gov)

SERVICES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS



As staffing increases there are additional advances/innovative resources that the CTSP can bring to the HSR&D community

QUALITATIVE SCAN

- The CTSP can capture the frequency of qualitative work being conducted within HSR&D
- As all submitted awards must contact our office for a budget, we have the ability to share with HSR&D CO the amount of qualitative work accomplished in the field



QUALITATIVE REPOSITORY

- While many logistical issues must be addressed, the CTSP can be developed into a repository of qualitative transcripts
- Such a repository—especially if it incorporates codes and is indexed—could facilitate secondary qualitative data analyses and meta-analyses
- Given the size of HSR&D qualitative research, such a repository could promote robust qualitative analyses as well as facilitate the analysis of rare populations

RAPID TURNAROUND SERVICES

- Once staffing is fully achieved, the CTSP can offer studies with pressing needs rapid turnaround services
- It would be critical that other studies do not have greater than a two week turnaround period
- Professional transcription services in the private sector offer a variety of such rapid turnaround services for different prices

VA SALT LAKE CITY IDEAS COIN QUALITATIVE CORE



- Currently building a PhD/MA trained team of qualitative analysts who are distinct from the CTSP transcription team
- For clients without local expertise, we can offer the resources for conducting qualitative coding and analyses

CONCLUSION

- The CTSP is a new national HSR&D service that does not require contracting outside of the VA, and avoids data security issues by having all transcriptions completed behind the VA firewall
- There are multiple types of services to support qualitative research

CTSP AND THE IDEAS 2.0 COIN QUALITATIVE CORE



QUESTIONS?

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