### Overview of Methods to Collect Information

The following table provides an overview of the major methods used for collecting data during evaluations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Overall Purpose</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| questionnaires,    | when need to quickly and/or easily get lots of information from people in a non  | -can complete anonymously  
 surveys,                                                   | -might not get careful feedback  
 checklists                                                      | -wording can bias client's responses  
                                                                | -are impersonal  
                                                                | -in surveys, may need sampling expert  
                                                                | -doesn't get full story | -inexpensive to administer  
                                                                | -easy to compare and analyze  
                                                                | -administer to many people  
                                                                | -can get lots of data  
                                                                | -many sample questionnaires already exist | -can take much time  
                                                                | -can be hard to analyze and compare  
                                                                | -can be costly  
                                                                | -interviewer can bias client's responses | -get full range and depth of information  
                                                                | -develops relationship with client  
                                                                | -can be flexible with client | -often takes much time  
                                                                | -info may be incomplete  
                                                                | -need to be quite clear about what looking for  
                                                                | -not flexible means to get data; data restricted to what already exists | -view operations of a program as they are actually occurring  
                                                                | -can adapt to events as they occur | -can be difficult to interpret seen behaviors  
                                                                | -can be complex to categorize observations  
                                                                | -can influence behaviors of program participants  
                                                                | -can be expensive |
| focus groups | explore a topic in depth through group discussion, e.g., about reactions to an experience or suggestion, understanding common complaints, etc.; useful in evaluation and marketing | quickly and reliably get common impressions -can be efficient way to get much range and depth of information in short time - can convey key information about programs | can be hard to analyze responses -need good facilitator for safety and closure -difficult to schedule 6-8 people together |
| case studies | to fully understand or depict client's experiences in a program, and conduct comprehensive examination through cross comparison of cases | fully depicts client's experience in program input, process and results -powerful means to portray program to outsiders | usually quite time consuming to collect, organize and describe -represents depth of information, rather than breadth |