

Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Leader: _____

Support Staff: _____

Date: _____

90 Minute Agenda

- Arrival/Bringing the group together to begin (5 minutes)
- Introduction of focus group leader and support staff and explanation of project, goals for the focus group, confidentiality, and the type of information covered in the focus group (5 minutes)
- Consent forms and survey completion (25 minutes)
- Break for need prioritization by focus group leader (5 minutes)
- Focus group dialogue (50 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Consent forms for participants (approximately 10 copies)
- Surveys (approximately 10 copies)
- Focus group questionnaire (1 copy for each member of the facilitation team)
- Paper
- Pens (15)

Facilitator Guidance

List the two basic need priority areas that will be discussed in this group.

1.

2.

List the two service need priority areas that will be discussed in this group.

3.

4.

Introduction

Hello. Thank you for making the time to be here today. My name is _____ and I am with _____. The N.J. Department of Children and Families is partnering with human services organizations in each county to undertake an assessment of local strengths and needs. The goal of this assessment is to collect the information needed to make sure the right mix of services and activities are available in every county in New Jersey to support families. The purpose of today's meeting is to find out about your experiences and perceptions as a community member in this county. Your feedback today will help our local and state level leaders in planning and taking action to meet the needs of New Jersey residents. This focus group is just one group of a series of focus groups. Information from everyone that we talk to will be combined to understand trends related to strengths and needs in this county.

Confidentiality Statement and Survey Completion

(Note to focus group facilitation team: The following confidentiality statement must be read verbatim.)

Your participation in this session is voluntary and confidential. Your name will not appear on any published papers and nothing you say today will be connected with you personally.

This focus group should last approximately 90 minutes. First, we will ask each of you to complete a survey. You will have approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey and hand it in to _____. Then, we will take a short break and then come back together to begin the conversation portion of the focus group.

Okay, let's get started with the survey, if you need any assistance or have any questions, please feel free to ask and we will be happy to assist you. When you have finished your consent form and survey, hold on to them and we will come around to collect them.

(Note to focus group facilitation team:

- **Allow 25 minutes for group participants to sign the form, complete survey and return both.)**
- **Ensure that all participants have returned signed consent forms.)**
- **Complete the Facilitation Team section of the survey after the focus group participants hands in the survey. This portion of the survey is intended to help to track the participant group and assist in data analysis later in the process.**
- **Try to complete a quick review of the Ranking Section (bottom of pg. 9) of the surveys to determine if the pre-selected priority areas make sense for the group. As directed by your leadership, determine if any changes need to be made to priority discussion areas for this group. Next, bring the groups back together to begin the focus group.)**

Focus Group Discussion

Okay, let's begin. First, let's me review some quick ground rules. We want to hear from all of you, so please do not be afraid to speak up. At the same time, please respect the other participants in the group. Do not cut them off or talk over them. Most importantly, the topics discussed in this focus group should not be discussed outside of this room. Please respect each other's point of view.

Okay, let's start off by quickly introducing ourselves.

(Note to focus group facilitation team: Before you start to ask questions, go around the room and ask participants to introduce themselves by the name they wish to be referred to and to share how long they have lived, worked or been an active member in the county.)

Thank you everyone. Now, in the survey you provided your opinions on a list of the different topics (e.g. food, transportation, employment). In the interest of time, in our group we are going to focus on _____, _____, _____, _____, and then have a discussion to better understand how we can make sure that the members of the community can actually begin using services once they learn about or are referred to them.

First, let's talk about _____.

(Note to focus group facilitation team: Ask question 1 – 3 for each priority need area.

Tip: Consider asking the group if it would be okay if you displayed the groups responses for each area on large paper or a writing board. This may help when asking the group to think across priority need areas in question 4-6.

1. When people need help related to _____, what do they currently do to try to meet the need?
2. When people struggle to meet their needs, what are some of the barriers that make it difficult for them to get help and fully address the need?
Example clarity questions: Are these barriers new (i.e., have they come up in the past 5 years or so?) Or are they long standing (i.e., existed persistently more than 5 years?)
3. What would be most helpful steps the county could take to address the barriers in this need area?

Now, Let's talk about another need that has been identified _____

(Note to focus group facilitation team: only ask the remaining questions once. You do not need to ask for every need area.)

4. Are there areas in the county where the barriers that we've been discussing for needs areas do not exist? Are there areas where these barriers have a larger impact?
5. The goal is for equal access to resources and services for everyone in the county. Are there any subgroups (e.g., race, ethnic group, children under a certain age, adolescents, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) that are influenced by the barriers related to any of the need areas that we have been discussing more than others?
6. How do most people learn about services in the county (e.g., other community members, churches, professionals in service organizations, schools, police, medical providers, print media, internet, etc.)?

(Note to focus group facilitation team: At the end of all focus group discussion, thank the group for taking time out of their schedule to participate in the focus group. Express appreciation for their willingness to participate and to share their perspectives.)