

SAMHSA Underage Alcohol Use Prevention Media Campaign Focus Group Plan

The Contractor proposes to conduct focus groups with parents of children 9-15 to inform SAMHSA's Underage Alcohol Use Prevention Media Campaign. Uncovering parents' perceptions and motivations, and getting their reactions to message concepts and early stage creative executions will set the campaign up for success.

Purpose

The Contractor recommends conducting two "rounds" of research at key points in the campaign development. The purpose of these discussions will be to understand the topics listed below.

Round 1

12 telephone focus groups, to be conducted as soon as SAMHSA approval is received, in April or May 2010

- General knowledge, attitudes, and behavior related to underage alcohol use and parenting
- Reactions to message concepts
- How the campaign can best reach them

Round 2

2 groups, Web/telephone, summer 2010

- Reactions to creative concepts (e.g., headlines, calls to action, example ads, storyboards)
- How the campaign can best reach them, including reaction to specific campaign approaches planned

Participants

All participants will be parents of children ages 9-15. The Contractor will recruit a mix of parents from different urban, rural, and suburban locations across the country and various socioeconomic levels. The Contractor will segment the groups on the four key factors bulleted below. As is standard in focus group research, the Contractor will plan at least two groups that represent each of these factors so that they may draw conclusions about their potentially unique perspectives.

- **Age of child:** The Contractor will separate parents of children into three groups that approximate the major developmental stages children of these ages go through: ages 9-11; ages 12-13; and ages 14-15. As children age,

parent influence and confidence in their parenting wanes and drinking increases, so this segmentation may reveal different perspectives.

- **Race and ethnicity:** The Contractor will hold separate groups for African American, White, and Hispanic parents, as both rates of underage drinking and parenting styles can vary among these groups.
- **Mother/father:** The Contractor will hold separate groups for mothers and fathers, as they often play different roles in family life. Additionally, as men and women, different approaches may appeal to them.
- **Military:** As military families have high rates of drinking alcohol, these families may have different perspectives on underage drinking and parenting. Also, this is a priority audience for SAMHSA. The Contractor will conduct separate groups for military moms and dads. These groups will include a mix of people from different races/ethnicities.

These mini-groups will have 6 participants. While telephone groups are usually recruited to capacity more quickly than in person groups, they have a slightly higher absence or “no show” rate than traditional in-person groups. Therefore the Contractor will recruit 10 parents per group to ensure 6 participate.

The Contractor will recruit parents through a professional focus group recruitment firm, which is an efficient and cost-effective method. The population to be targeted is hard to reach due to the fact that for most parents the subject might be of a sensitive nature and they might be hesitant to discuss it. Therefore the Contractor intends to provide a \$30 gift card to participants.

Table 1: Group Segmentation

	AFRICAN AMERICAN	WHITE	HISPANIC	MILITARY
MOTHERS				
9-11	1 group		1 group	
12-13		1 group		1 group
14-15	1 group		1 group	
FATHERS				
9-11		1 group		1 group

12-13	1 group		1 group	
14-15		1 group		1 group

Format

The Contractor recommends telephone focus groups instead of in-person groups for this population. Parents of kids ages 9–15 are difficult to reach due to time constraints and childrearing responsibilities. Furthermore, this hard to reach population also may be hesitant to discuss sensitive topics face-to-face in the presence of others who they may encounter in their daily lives. Frazier et al discussed several reasons why telephone focus groups often yield more information than face-to-face focus groups on sensitive subjects.¹

Visual anonymity encourages honest feedback: Parents will not know each other and will be more likely to “open up” about sensitive topics (e.g., how they parent, illegal behaviors such as providing alcohol to minors) and provide frank feedback to messages and concepts. Visual anonymity in general helps people to feel more comfortable talking about personal experiences and reduce the social stigma associated with disclosing potentially embarrassing opinions or experiences.

An example of this comes from a report written by George Silverman of Market Navigation, in which doctors who participated in phone focus groups were so open that they discussed errors they had made in patient treatment, improper medication dosages, and even fatal medical malpractice errors.²

Increased physical distance between participants: Participants are more likely to share personal experiences because they will not encounter other participants again. Anonymity of this type is less well assured in face-to-face focus groups because participants typically live in the same geographic area.

Removal of visual distractions: Telephone communication removes visual distractions that are present in face-to-face focus groups. When reflective thought is interrupted by loud noise, visual images, or performance of a competing task, introspection and self-awareness are reduced. Removal of distractions promotes more frequent and more accurate disclosures of personal information.

¹ Frazier, L., Miller, V., Horbelt, D., Delmore, J., Miller, B., & Paschal, A. (2010). Comparison of Focus Groups on Cancer and Employment Conducted Face to Face or by Telephone. *Qualitative Health Research*, 1(1049732310361466).

² Silverman, G. (1994) *Introduction to Telephone Focus Groups*, <http://www.mnav.com/phonefoc.htm>

Rosalind Hurworth, a researcher with the Centre for Program Evaluation, University of Melbourne, summarized the practical benefits of using telephone focus groups this way³:

- **Less expensive:** Telephone focus groups greatly reduce overhead cost to the government. There are no facility fees, participant food, or travel costs.
- **More convenient:** Participants are more likely to participate because of the ease at which they can join the group via phone. SAMHSA and contractor team can attend without traveling.
- **More diverse:** Parents from around the country can join, eliminating the risk of basing a national campaign on the perspectives of a handful of communities, or on people with certain lifestyles that make it easy to travel to groups at designated times.

Participants will receive the message concepts by mail and receive instruction not to open them ahead of time. The purpose of asking participants not to open the envelope is so that program planners can try to get the participants' first reaction to some of the statements in the document. However, if a participant opens the envelope before the actual focus group, it will not cause any detriment to the data collection. Furthermore, participants will not be expected to read the entire packet before proceeding through the call.

Each group will be 60 minutes in length.

Additional Information

For each round, the Contractor will prepare:

- a recruit/screener for males and for females,
- a moderator's guide, and
- the specific materials to be tested, including message and creative concepts.

In addition, the Contractor will handle all recruitment and other logistics.

The Contractor will provide a senior moderator to facilitate the groups, which will be audio recorded and transcribed.

The Contractor will provide SAMHSA with reports that both summarize the findings and offer specific recommendations for applying them to the campaign products and activities.

³ Hurworth, R. (Director) (2004, October 15). The Use of Telephone Focus Groups for Evaluation. *Australasian Evaluation Society 2004 International Conference*. Lecture conducted from Centre for Program Evaluation, University of Melbourne, Adelaide.