

Attachment C: Focus Group Moderator Guide for Low-income Mothers

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USDA/FNS Formative Messaging Focus Group Guide (Low-income Mothers)

WELCOME AND GROUND RULES

Welcome everyone. My name is _____. I am an independent marketing researcher. Thank you for coming for this discussion. Before we begin, I'd like to explain a few things about how the discussion will work.

1. First of all, I want everyone to know there are **no wrong answers**. (We want to know your opinions and those opinions might differ. This is fine. We want to know what each of you thinks about the topics we will be discussing.)
2. You have probably noticed the microphones in the room. They are here because we are **audiotaping** the discussion. Afterwards, I have to write a report. I want to give you my full attention and not have to take a lot of notes. Also, because we are taping, it is important that you try to **speak one at a time**. I may occasionally interrupt you when two or more people are talking at once in order to be sure everyone gets a chance to talk and that responses are accurately recorded.
3. Behind me is a one-way mirror. Some of the people working on this project are observing this discussion so that they can hear your opinions directly from you. However, your identity and anything you personally say here will remain confidential. Your names, addresses, and phone numbers will not be given to anyone, and no one will contact you after this group is over. When I write my report, I will not refer to anyone by name.
4. Please turn off your **beepers & cell phones**. The group will last only 90 minutes. Should you need to go to the restroom during the discussion, please feel free to leave, but we'd appreciate it if you would go one at a time.
5. Feel free to say what is on your mind. If you have something negative to say, it is all right. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. We just want to hear your opinions.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Now, first let's spend a little time getting to know one another. Let's go around the table and introduce each of ourselves. Please tell me:
 - First name, and
 - What local area you live in, and
 - A little bit about yourself—such as what you do for a living, a favorite hobby, and...

[MODERATOR: Instruct respondents that when questions in the guide refer to children, they should think about their child/ren in the age range for their specific focus group. So, if they are in the young child group, they should think of their pre-K (2-5 year-old) child/ren. If they are in the school-aged child group, they should think of their 6-10 year-old child/ren, even if they have another child in a different age range.]

II. GLIMPSE OF SCHEDULE/INFORMATION-GATHERING

1. We are going to begin our discussion this evening by learning a bit more about you
 - a. Take a moment and walk me through what a typical day is like for you
[MODERATOR: Get a sense of the time crunch respondents feel during their days.]
2. How do you typically get information—television, radio, newspaper, magazine, online, friends or family (word-of-mouth)?
 - a. From what information sources do you usually get information on health—television, radio, newspaper, magazine, online, friends or family (word-of-mouth)?
 - i. [IF ONLINE:] What Web sites do you visit to get this information?
 - ii. [IF TELEVISION/MAGAZINES:] What shows/magazines?

III. BEING HEALTHY

1. We are going to shift our discussion this evening and focus a bit on health.
 - a. Let's talk about the phrase, "being healthy." Let's take a moment to come up with a list of ways in which **you** try to "be healthy". [MODERATOR WRITE RESPONSES ON EASEL.]
 - b. Looking at our list, which of these things are the easiest to do? Which are the hardest? What makes you say that?
 - i. [GO THROUGH LIST AND IDENTIFY WITH RESPONDENTS WHICH ARE "EASY" & WHICH ARE "HARD"]
 - ii. What do you think about how we classified these items? What, if anything, do you notice anything about those that are easy? About those that are hard?

IV. HELPING CHILDREN STAY HEALTHY

1. Now let's shift the focus to discussing helping **our children** be healthy.
 - a. What are some things that you do to help your children be healthy? [MODERATOR WRITE RESPONSES ON EASEL.] [PROBE: EXERCISE VS. NUTRITION]

- b. Looking at our list, which of these things are the easiest to do? Which are the hardest? What makes you say that?
- i. [GO THROUGH LIST AND IDENTIFY WITH RESPONDENTS WHICH ARE “EASY” & WHICH ARE “HARD”]
 - ii. What do you think about how we classified these items? What, if anything, do you notice anything about those that are easy? What about those that are hard?
 - iii. What are some reasons why you don’t do these things as much as you would like?
- c. Let’s look at a few of these items and really focus in on what keeps us from being able to make sure it happens for our children. [PROBE: Fruit and vegetable consumption:]
- i. [If cost:] Just so I understand, is it all fruits and vegetables that are expensive?
 1. Is there a difference between fresh fruits and vegetables versus other kinds? What makes you say that? What about purchasing frozen, canned, or dried fruits and vegetables? Are those possible options? What makes you say that? [MODERATOR: determine if each is an option, separately]
 2. What advice, if any, would you give mothers who are looking to purchase fruits and vegetables for their children, but they are on a limited budget?
 - ii. [If kids won’t eat them/spoilage:] What is your child/ren’s response when they are offered fruits or vegetables? Is that true for all fruits and veggies or just some?
 1. At what times, if any, are fruits and vegetables most often an option for your children—breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert, snacks?
 2. At what times, if any, is it easier to get your child/ren to eat fruits and veggies? What makes you say that?
 3. When are your children most likely to get food for themselves—breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert, snacks?
 - a. What, if anything, do you think you could do to make it easier for your child/ren to select fruits and vegetables at those times?
 - b. [PROBE: Easier access to the foods, limit access to other options]
 - c. What, if anything, can be done ahead of time to help you to prepare for the times when your child/ren selects foods for him/herself?
 - iii. [For parents of school-aged children:] Was it easier or harder to get your child to eat fruits and vegetables before they went to elementary school? What makes you say that?
- d. In your opinion, what do you think is the hardest part about being a mom trying to help her children eat healthy?

V. Laddering Exercise

I’d like to spend a little more time talking about eating fruits and vegetables.

- a. Let's make a list. What are the benefits you see when your children eat fruits and vegetables (or what is good about getting your child to eat fruits and vegetables)?

FOR EACH INQUIRY, MODERATOR LADDERS RESPONENDS WITH LINE OF INQUIRY BELOW, RECORDING LADDERS ON FLIPCHART

- b. OK, let's take that benefit a little further. Why is that [INSERT 1ST LEVEL BENEFIT] important to **you**?
- c. OK, but why is that [INSERT 2ND LEVEL BENEFIT] of value to **you**? What do **you** value about it?
- d. OK, tell me more about [INSERT 3RD LEVEL BENEFIT/VALUE]. How do **you** feel when you have that in your life?
- e. Can **you** think of other experiences/times in your life that you associate with [INSERT 4TH LEVEL BENEFIT/FEELING]? When are you most likely to feel that way?

[MODERATOR: Explore 2-3 ladders, as time allows. Probe for the emotions associated with providing fruits and vegetables for children. What emotions do moms associate with providing this for their children?]

VI. STRATEGIC MESSAGES

1. As you know, we just discussed how it is difficult to get our families to eat healthfully. Now, we are going to read some statements written to help people to get themselves, and their children, to eat more fruits and vegetables.

[PASS OUT CARDS AND HANDOUT 1] Each statement is written on a card. I would like you to sort these cards. Place the card with the statement that you think does the best job of getting you and your children to eat more fruits and vegetables on top. Put the one that does the second-best job underneath that one, and so on and so forth, until you get to the card that did the worst job (which should be on the bottom).

After you have done that, you will notice that each card has a letter in the lower right-hand corner. On Handout 1, please write the letters of the cards in the order in which you have stacked them. Then, we'll talk about it.

[NOTE TO MODERATOR: To the extent possible, try to get respondents to ignore issues with grammar and/or word choice. The key is to have them focus on the concepts.]

[NOTE: NO MORE THAN 8 STATEMENTS WILL BE USED FOR TESTING. EACH CONCEPT WILL BE REPRESENTED]

- a. [GO AROUND TABLE:] Which one did the best job? The second best job? Take a moment and explain why you selected those as your top two? [PROBE: likes, main idea/takeaway]
 - i. Did these two rise to the top, or were there others that you thought were just about as good as these were? Which others, if any, were close to the top for you? What did you like about them?

- b. [GO AROUND TABLE:] Now, let's look at the other side of the coin. Which did not speak to you at all? [IF NECESSARY:] Which two statements were at the bottom of your stack? Please explain why you thought these statements did a bad job.
- c. Were any of the statements confusing to you? Which one(s)? What about them were confusing?

2. Now, I want to ask about some statements, specifically.

[THE FOLLOWING SECTION WILL BE USED FOR SPECIFIC PROBES OF STATEMENTS. STATEMENTS WILL BE GROUPED ACCORDING TO SIMILARITY OF UMBRELLA CONCEPT.]

- a. Take a look at cards [INSERT CARD LETTERS]
 - i. Take a moment to reread these statements. What images or thoughts come to mind when you read them?
 - ii. Does anything in these statements connect with you? If yes, how so? What, if anything, jumped out at you? What makes you say that?
 - iii. Do these statements seem realistic to you? What makes you say that?
 - iv. [IF NOT PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED:] What are these statements lacking? What about them did you not like?

[REPEAT FOR ALL CONCEPT GROUPS]

3. Throughout this evening, we have talked and read about helping you and your children eat more fruits and vegetables. Is there anything we missed? In other words, is there something that would help you to get your children to eat more fruits and vegetables that has not been discussed so far? What is it?
4. Let's go back and look at the list we made at the beginning of the groups where we identified what's hardest to get our children to do. When we think about getting our children to eat fruits and vegetables, have we covered all of the things that make it hard for us to get them to eat fruits and vegetable? What have we missed?
 - a. What do you think can be done to help us to get past this?
 - b. What additional help would be necessary to get your children to eat fruits and vegetables, despite this challenge?

CONSUMPTION MESSAGES (FOR MOMS OF 2-5 YEAR OLDS ONLY)

1. Now we are going to shift gears for a moment and cover another topic. I want you to think about a meal in your household when you are eating with your child. First, for most meals, do you put food on your child's plate, or do your children help themselves?

- a. [If they prepare plate:] How do you decide how much to put on your child's plate? Does it matter what food it is? What makes you say that?
2. Let's again think about a meal in your household. You are eating with your child, and your child says, "I'm full, Mommy." How do you respond?
 - a. Take me through how the conversation usually goes.
 - b. How can you tell if your child is full? What if food is left on his/her plate?
3. Now, let's again think about a meal in your household. Again, you are eating with your child, and your child asks for more food. How do you respond?
 - a. Do you usually give your child seconds if he/she asks for it? When, if ever, do you not give your child seconds?
 - b. Does it matter what they are asking for? What makes you say that?
4. Now I would like you to take a moment and read the statements that are written on Handout A. These statements are designed to help parents know when their child has eaten enough food. Before we talk about them, please circle the one that you find as the most convincing.

[FOR THIS EXERCISE, ONLY INCLUDE STATEMENTS THAT SPEAK TO THE AMOUNT OF FOOD THAT SHOULD BE CONSUMED]

- a. What is your initial reaction to what you just read?
- b. Is the information easy to believe? Hard to believe? What makes you say that?
- c. Which message did you find to be the most convincing? What makes you say that?

FALSE CLOSE

1. Tonight we discussed a number of things regarding eating fruits and vegetables. While I step out of the room for a moment to see if I need to cover any additional information, please answer the question on Handout 2. [DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT 2] The question on this handout reads, "What is the one thing you would tell a friend if you were going to help him/her get their children to eat more fruits and vegetables?"

Thank you very much for your participation! Have a great evening!