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**USDA/FNS Formative Messaging
Focus Group Guide (Low-income Mothers of 6-10 year-olds)**

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,
 - Who do you live with (ages of children), pets, plants, etc. and

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- A little bit about yourself—such as what you do for a living, a favorite hobby, and...

[MODERATOR: Make sure to get ages of other children in household, if any]

[MODERATOR: Instruct respondents that when questions in the guide refer to children, they should think of their 6-10 year-old child/ren, even if they have another child in a different age range. REMIND THEM OF THIS THROUGHOUT THE SESSION]

II. GLIMPSE OF SCHEDULE

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. [BRIEF]
[MODERATOR: Get a sense of the time crunch respondents feel during their days.]
 - b. Thank you for that information. Given the schedules you just described for me, tell me what a typical dinner is like at your house.
 - i. Think about last night. What did you have for dinner? What did you drink with dinner?
 - ii. What did your 6-10 year old child have for dinner? What did he/she drink with dinner?

III. HELPING CHILDREN STAY HEALTHY

1. Now let's shift the focus to discussing getting **our 6-10 year-old children** to eat fruits and vegetables.
 - a. Do you think that it is something easy/hard to do? What makes you say that?
 - b. What can be hard about it?
 - c. [If cost:] Just so I understand, is it all fruits and vegetables that are expensive?
 - i. 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]
 - ii. 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?
 - d. [If availability/access:] Just so I understand, is it all fruits and vegetables that are difficult to access/hard to find? Just fresh? What makes you say that?
[PROBE: Limited access to supermarkets? Limited produce selection within supermarkets?]
 - i. [IF NOT DISCUSSED ABOVE:] Are frozen, canned, or dried fruits an option for your family? What makes you say that?

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- e. [If kids won't eat them/spoilage:] What is your 6-10 year-old child/ren's response when they are offered fruits or vegetables? Is that true for all fruits and veggies or just some?
 - f. Does your 6-10 year old child ever ask to eat fruits or vegetables?
 - i. [IF SO:] What, specifically does he/she ask for?
 - ii. When, if at all, does he/she usually ask for fruits or vegetables?
 - g. At what times, if any, is it easier to get your 6-10 year-old child/ren to eat fruits and veggies? What makes you say that?
 - h. When are your 6-10 year-old children most likely to get food for themselves—breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert, snacks?
 - i. What, if anything, do you think you could do to make it easier for your 6-10 year-old child/ren to select fruits and vegetables at those times?
 - ii. [PROBE: Easier access to the foods, limit access to other options]
 - i. Do you eat fruits and vegetables?
 - i. How often would you say you eat them?
2. We've spoken about eating fruits and vegetables. Now I want to switch gears for a moment and talk about milk.
- a. Do you usually buy milk? What type? [IF NECESSARY, PROBE: lowfat, whole, skim, 1%, 2%] Why do you buy that type of milk?
 - b. When do you usually give your 6-10 year old child milk? [PROBE: meals, with snacks]
 - c. Is milk usually the only drink you offer to them, or do you give your 6-10 year old child other drink choices?
 - d. What does your 6-10 year old child think about milk? Do they like it?
 - e. Is it easier or harder to get your 6-10 year-old to drink milk now compared to when they were younger? What makes you say that?
 - f. Do you try to get your 6-10 year-old to drink milk now as much as you tried to get him/her to drink milk when they were younger?
 - i. [IF APPROPRIATE:] Why do you think there is a difference now, compared to when he/she was younger?
 - ii. Do you think that people of different ages need different types of milk? [PROBE: fat-free versus whole milk]
 - g. [IF APPROPRIATE:] What are some things you say/do to try to get your 6-10 year old child to drink milk? [PROBE: Flavored milks]
 - h. Do you personally drink milk at meals or with snacks? Why/why not?

[NOTE TO MODERATOR: FOR STRATEGIC MESSAGES SECTIONS, ROTATE ORDER OF TESTING FRUIT AND VEGETABLES MESSAGES/SUPPORTING CONTENT AND MILK MESSAGES.]

IV. STRATEGIC MESSAGES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION – FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

As you know, we just discussed issues about getting 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.

We are going to look at a set of statements.

Each statement is written on a card. I would like you to sort these cards. Place the card that you think does the best job of helping **you to help your child 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.]

Messages:

Availability/Accessibility

Want your kids to reach for a healthy snack? Make sure fruits and veggies are in reach.
When they come home hungry, feed them ready-to-eat fruits and veggies.

Making it Easy

Fresh. Frozen. Canned. Dried. Teach your kids to find fruits and veggies all over the store.
Let your kids be “produce pickers.” Help them pick fruit and veggies at the store.

1. Message Preferences

- a. [GO AROUND TABLE:] Which card did the best job? Take a moment and explain why you selected that as your top? [PROBE: likes, main idea/takeaway]

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- b. [GO AROUND TABLE:] Now, let's look at the other side of the coin. Which **ONE CARD** did not speak to you at all? [IF NECESSARY:] Which **ONE CARD** was at the bottom of your stack? Please explain why you thought it did a bad job.

2. Other Measures

[GO AROUND TABLE:] Looking again at all of the cards, which ONE is the most believable?

- a. What made you select that one?

[GO AROUND TABLE] Finally, when you look at all of the cards, which ONE is the easiest for you to picture?

- a. What do you picture? What images first come to mind?
- b. Can you relate to that image? What makes you say that?
- c. What about this image is appealing to you?

3. Specific Message Probes

- a. What was your reaction to the phrase "produce pickers"?

4. Supporting Documentation

For the moment, please put those cards to the side. We are going to look at some additional information that has been written to go with the messages you just read.

[DISTRIBUTE SUPPORTING CONTENT, NARRATIVE PARAGRAPH]

First, read this paragraph written by a mom of a 6-10 year-old. **Circle** any statement, word, or phrase that you particularly like, and **draw a line through** any statement, word, or phrase that you did not like or did not understand.

- a. Before we talk about specifics. What did you think of this paragraph? [PROBE: Interesting? Informative? Boring?]
- b. Did it sound realistic? What makes you say that?
- c. What do you think about the ideas she talks about? Are they believable? Doable?
- d. Would you try these ideas? Which ones? What makes you say that?

[DISTRIBUTE SUPPORTING CONTENT, REMAINING INFORMATION] Now I am going to show you more information. Again, this information has been written to go with the messages you read on the cards. Don't worry about how they look on the page, for now, just focus on what is written.

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I would like for you to take the next few moments to read this information and **circle** any statement, word, or phrase that you particularly like, and **draw a line through** any statement, word, or phrase that you did not like or did not understand. Then, we'll talk about them.

- a. Before we talk about specifics. What did you think of what was written on the pages?
[PROBE: Interesting? Informative? Boring?]
- b. [GO AROUND TABLE] What stood out to you? Which TWO or THREE statements, phrases or words did you like best? Take a moment and explain why you chose those.
[MODERATOR IDENTIFY WHAT PEOPLE CIRCLED] [PROBE: **Helpful, realistic, doable**]
- c. Now, let's look at the other side of the coin. Which statements, phrases or words did you cross out because you did not like or did not understand them? Take a moment to explain why you chose those.
[MODERATOR IDENTIFY WHAT PEOPLE CROSSED-OUT]
- d. Think about the information you just read about making fruits and vegetables more accessible to your elementary school aged child. Is it believable? Does it make getting your elementary school aged child to eat fruits and vegetables seem more doable? What makes you say that?
- e. Let's say that you were creating a brochure and you had to select which of the information you just read to put into it. Since brochures are small, you can't use all of the information you read. What 1 or 2 pieces of information on this page do you think HAVE to be included? Why did you select those?
- f. Can you think of other tips that you have tried at home that would be helpful for other moms to know? What are they?

V. STRATEGIC MESSAGES – MILK CONSUMPTION

Now we are going to look a new set of statements. 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 to serve fat-free or low-fat milk to your children** 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 2, 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

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grammar and/or word choice. The key is to have them focus on the concepts.]

Pour some for everyone. Fat-free or low-fat milk helps the whole family stay healthy. Or Pour some for everyone. Low-fat or Fat-free milk helps the whole family stay healthy.
Pour some for everyone. Fat-free or 1% milk helps the whole family stay healthy.
They're still growing. Help your kids grow strong. Serve fat-free or low-fat milk at meals.
Fat-free and low-fat milk: same nutrition but lower in fat. Pour the goodness at every meal. OR REVISED VERSION

- 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]
 - b. [GO AROUND TABLE:] Now, let's look at the other side of the coin. Which **ONE** did not speak to you at all? [IF NECESSARY:] Which **ONE** statement was at the bottom of your stack? Please explain why you thought this statement 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. [ONLY ASKED IF NOT COVERED ABOVE]
- a. What did you think about the statement that talked about the nutrition and fat? Is that something you think about when buying milk?
 - b. Now that you have read this information, will it make you more likely to buy low-fat or fat-free milk? What makes you say that?

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1. While I step out of the room for a moment to see if I need to cover any additional information, please answer the two questions on Handout 3. [DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT 3] The questions on this handout read,

“What is the one thing you would tell a friend if you were going to help him/her get their 6-10 year-old children to eat more fruits and vegetables?”

“What is the one thing you would tell a friend if you were going to help him/her get their 6-10 year-old children to drink more low-fat milk?”

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