

APPENDIX J:

IC9: Focus Group Guide (Affected Public = Private Sector)

Child Welfare Information Gateway Focus Group Template

Purpose:

To learn more about the information needs of child welfare and related professionals that work with families and children so that Child Welfare Information Gateway can improve its products and services to better meet their needs, and ultimately, improve services and outcomes for children and families.

How the information will be used:

- To inform Product Development regarding the content (topics, level of detail) of new and updated products to meet the information needs of these customer groups
- To inform Marketing about how to make these audiences aware of relevant Child Welfare Information Gateway products and services
- To inform Library Services about the types of materials to acquire to meet the information needs of these customers
- To inform Website Services about the content, organization, and presentation of website information to meet the needs of these customers
- To inform Management about staff development needs for Child Welfare Information Gateway staff to better serve these customers

Participants:

- Public child welfare agency direct service staff, supervisors, and managers
- Community agency (including child welfare and related professionals) direct service staff, supervisors, and managers

Introduction (10 minutes)

Introduce leaders of the focus group and roles of each in supporting the meeting.

We are conducting focus groups around the country to better understand what information would be most useful to those serving children and families and how we can better get that information to you. Your participation is voluntary and confidential – your input will not be connected to you personally, but will be combined with others for a fuller picture of the issues. We are tape recording the session to be sure our notes are accurate, but again, we will not connect any names to any comments. Please let me know if you have any concerns about this.

We would like to be able to connect input from various types of participants (e.g., CPS staff, supervisors, etc...), so if you haven't already, we would like you to complete a short form about yourselves (no names, though) that has questions about your job title or role, the type of agency you work at, the clients you serve, and a few other questions. We are also assigning each of you a number so we can ultimately look at input from the different types of participants we'll have.

[The form should enable the notetaker to assign a number to each participant. Then, as much as possible, the notetaker can indicate a number next to a comment (e.g., 1 – read a

factsheet on substance abusing parents; 3 – wants info about home visiting). During analysis, we may be able to see if there are differences among different types of staff.]

This focus group involves a few questions to learn about the kinds of information you have used in your jobs that you've found helpful, and how you learn about new information. As this is a focus group, remember that there are no wrong answers or bad questions – we want your honesty and we expect differences of opinion. The only limitation is to try and stay on time so we can cover all our questions.

Let's do brief introductions –your name and what you do.

Have any of you heard of the Child Welfare Information Gateway?

Briefly introduce the Information Gateway to provide a foundation and parameters for what Information Gateway can do to help them improve their services and improve outcomes for the children and families they serve.

- Describe our mission to serve as a gateway to information that protects children and strengthens families. Explain we are a service of the Children's Bureau, ACF, US. DHHS.
- Briefly describe our topical scope and gateway concept.
- Emphasize that Information Gateway provides information services (not direct services), and that our information is generally at the national or state level. We do not advocate for policies. CH has 2.5 million visits to websites, and 14,000 calls and emails, and 50 new and updated products each year and exhibit at 50 conferences.
- Mention that almost all services and products are free.

[Don't provide too much detail here; it may limit their thinking too much.]

We will use your input, along with input from other groups like this around the country, to make decisions about new products and services. We want to develop products and services that will meet your needs, and that will help you improve your services and outcomes for the children and families you work with.

Any questions before we begin?

Questions – Explain the notecards and why we are using them so they won't be influenced by colleagues in the focus group. – Explain we will discussing their responses for about 15 minutes or so, then asking them additional questions.

1. Think about something you have read in the last 6 months or so that you feel had a significant impact on your services to children and families. It could be something in print or online. We're passing out notecards with some questions. We'd like you to write down your answers, then we'll discuss them and write some notes on the flipchart. **(5 minutes writing; 15 minutes discussing)**

Notecard says:

Think about something you have read in the last 6 months or so that you feel had a significant impact on your services to children and families. It could be something in print or online.

- a. What was the information about?
- b. What was the format (e.g., a fact sheet, a newsletter, a webpage, etc.)?
- c. How did you use the information? How was it helpful?
- d. How did you receive this information (e.g., from a conference, your supervisor, etc.)?

Ask participants to share what they've written and write it on a flipchart. Probe for detail:

- Specific topics
- For what audiences
- How was it helpful?
- Length, level of detail, format
- Electronic or print
- Where they got info – What trainings? What conferences? What newsletters? What websites?

Mention that there are two types of information we're particularly interested in (or if these types have been mentioned, say it that way) – information that would help them as professionals, and information that they might give to families that would be helpful to the families.

2. Think about a challenge you face in your work with children and families, and then thinking about information that would be helpful to you as a professional OR information that could be given to families : **(15 minutes)**

- a. What topics would interest you?
- b. What would make you most likely to read it?
- c. How would you use this information?
- d. What are your preferences for length, level of detail, online/print, online chat, webcast, conference call?
- e. Do you generally look for this kind of information, do you just receive it, or do you not get this kind of information? Probe about where they look or where they get it from.
- f. What topics would be most helpful for families?
- g. What would be preferable in terms of length, level of detail, online/print?
- h. Do you generally look for this kind of information, do you just receive it, or do you not get this kind of information? Probe about where they look or where they get it from.

3. If Information Gateway had the kind of information that would be helpful to you or to families, what would be the best way to let you and your colleagues know it's available? **(5 minutes)**

- a. Probe for specifics.
- b. Explain E-lert and CBX and explore if they would be useful vehicles.

Closing (2 minutes)

We're done! Thank you so much for your ideas and your time. Do you have any questions for us?

[Pass out a packet containing an Information Gateway flyer and selected products, and encourage them to contact us anytime.]