

**APPENDIX B**

**GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS WITH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

## PROTOCOL FOR FOCUS GROUPS WITH PARTICIPANT COUPLES

### NOTE:

- \* This is a guide, not a script. Moderators may select and tailor their probes in response to the experiences recounted by group members.

### I. INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

#### A. Moderator and co-facilitator introductions

Explain we are an independent research firm; most work is for federal government, evaluating programs. In this project, we are studying how BSF programs work. Welcome participants and thank them for coming

#### B. Explanation of Project and Purpose of Group Discussion

Describe what a focus group is – a way to find out what people think through group discussion. We are interested in learning about your ideas, feelings, and opinions. We are interested in learning about how you came to be involved in this program, what program activities you have participated in, what you find helpful about this program, and what you think should be improved.

#### C. Confidentiality and Taping

Information we collect will be summarized only for the project; what you say will be kept private. We will not use any names or quote anyone.

We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we capture all of it. So we will be taping the session and taking notes. Does anyone have any objection to taping this group?

#### D. Ground Rules for Discussion

- ▶ This will be an informal discussion.
- ▶ We will talk for about 1 to 1½ hours. There will be no formal breaks. Please feel free to get up at any time to stretch, go to the bathroom, and help yourself to some light refreshments.
- ▶ At the end of the session there will be a short information form to complete. You don't need to put your name on the form. All information is private.
- ▶ There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we will ask. We are interested in learning each of your opinions. We very much appreciate your input.

- ▶ We would like only one person to talk at a time so the recorder can pick up everyone. But we hope that each of you will speak up, and tell us your thoughts and feelings.
- ▶ To keep us on schedule, I may change the subject or move ahead. Please stop me if you have something to add.
- ▶ To help us keep track of comments, we may record some points on a flip chart.

## **II. PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS** (5 minutes)

For the first group of questions and to get things started, I'm going to go around the room and ask each of you in turn to answer a few questions about yourself. Then we will have some more general discussion about your experiences in [BSF program] activities. We would like everyone to participate in the discussion.

Ask each person to introduce him/herself – please tell us:

How long you have known each other, whether you live together or are married

How many children you have together, and whether you have other children

## **III. DISCUSSION TOPICS AND PROBES**

### **A. REFERRAL TO BSF** (10 minutes)

1. How did you come to be in this program -- what brought you to it?  
*Probes: referred by case manager; heard about it from a friend; outreach activities such as fliers, presentations at welfare office, housing complex, health care clinic, or hospital?*
2. What were your reasons for participating? Was there anything in particular that convinced you to participate in the program?
3. What did you expect to get out of the program?

### **B. WHAT WERE THE IMPORTANT PARTS OF THE PROGRAM?** (15 minutes)

1. We are interested in how the [BSF program] works as you see it and experienced it. What are the main parts of the program that you were involved with?

2. What kinds of help did you get from each part of the program? Were there particular problems you were facing that you got help with from the group sessions? From other program staff such as the [family coordinators]?

**C. HOW MUCH DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN GROUP SESSIONS? (15 minutes)**

1. What was it like to start going to the [BSF] group sessions? Did you have any fears or concerns about participating? How quickly did you start after you entered the program?
2. What kinds of things did you learn in the group sessions, if anything? What seemed to be the most helpful? The least helpful?
3. How many times did you go to the group sessions? Did you always go together, or sometimes only one of you?
4. If you missed some weeks, what were the major reasons? Did you have problems with transportation, child care, or inconvenient hours?
5. What was your relationship with the group facilitators? What qualities do you think are important for group facilitators to have?
6. Did you ever get any special gifts or prizes when you went to group sessions? How important were they to you as a reason for going?

**D. WHAT ELSE DID YOU GET FROM THE PROGRAM? (15 minutes)**

1. Other than the people who led the group sessions, was there a particular person connected to the program who was your main contact?
2. If so, what was that person's job? How often did you see or talk to that person?
3. What kinds of things did you and that person talk about?
5. What kinds of issues did he/she help you with? How did she/he help you?
6. What was your experience with other couples in your group? Do you see participating with other couples as a benefit or a disadvantage of the program?

**E. VALUE OF PROGRAM/SERVICES (15 minutes)**

1. Do you think the [BSF program] has helped you? If so, in what way? Has it helped you as individuals? As a couple? In what ways?
2. Has this program been of any importance for your child or children? In what way?

3. Is there anything about the program that you would like to be different? Were there or are there any topics or issues you wish the program would cover, talk more about, or help you with?

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND WRAP-UP** *(10 minutes)*

Summary of Key Points (What I'm hearing from you is...)

Does anyone have any other thoughts or comments about programs like BSF?

Thank the participants.

Explain and distribute short (anonymous) questionnaire.

*[Hand out incentive payments and have participants sign receipts]*

**CLIENT FOCUS GROUP  
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM**

Please complete this form. The information will be used only to summarize participant information at this meeting. Your name and address are not needed.

LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

1. I am a  Male  Female
2. My age is:  less than 20 years  31-40 years  56 years+  
 21-30 years  41-55 years
3. My ethnic background is: (check all that apply)  
 Caucasian/white  Hispanic/Latino  Asian/Pacific Islander  
 African-American/black  American Indian  Other(specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. My marital status is:  
 Never married  Married  Unmarried and living with partner  
 Divorced  Separated  Unmarried and not living with partner
5. I live with my partner and child:  
 All of the time  Some of the time  Little or none of the time
6. Number of children (under age 18) living with me: \_\_\_\_\_
7. The highest education I completed was:  
 Grammar/Elementary School  Tech/Vocational School  
 Junior High/Middle School  Community College  
 High School or G.E.D.  University (4 year)  
 Graduate school
8. I am currently:  
 not employed  
 working less than 20 hours per week  
 working more than 20 hours per week
9. I am currently:  
 receiving TANF (welfare, cash assistance) benefits  
 not receiving TANF (welfare, cash assistance) benefits
10. I enrolled in the [BSF] program in about \_\_\_\_\_  
Month/Year

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!**