

## **FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR'S GUIDE: MEMORIAL PROGRAMS SERVICE**

### **Welcome**

I'm Pat Brick and I'd like to thank you all for joining us here tonight. As you already know, this is a focus group conducted for the Memorial Programs Service, National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs. The Memorial Programs Service provides headstones and grave markers and Presidential Memorial Certificates for deceased veterans. You have been invited here this evening because you have lost a family member or friend who was a veteran. You have been identified as the person who ordered a Veterans headstone or marker for the grave of the deceased veteran. A few of you may be funeral directors who have ordered a Veteran's headstone or marker for the deceased veteran. For those of you who have experienced a loss, we extend our sincere condolences and thank you again for so generously assisting us this evening.

A focus group explores ideas, issues, and experiences in a semi-structured manner with the goal of gaining insight into what people think and feel about something. Tonight, we will be talking about your experience of ordering a grave marker for a veteran from the VA. For the focus group to generate valuable and interesting information, everyone must participate. There are no right or wrong answers and everyone's experience is important and valuable.

### **BASIC GROUND RULES:**

- Certain collections of information, such as focus groups, require approval from, the Office of Management and Budget. The generic clearance approval number for this collection of information is OMB Control No. 2900-0571.
- To ensure your privacy, our contract with this facility forbids them to tell us anything about you except your first name.
- We are audio-taping the meeting for use in preparing a report about findings. Because we are taping this meeting, I ask that you speak loudly and clearly. If I think you are speaking too softly to be heard on the tape, I will ask you to speak up.
- Please speak one at a time so everyone has a chance to participate.

- Please try not to engage in side conversations -- we need for everyone to hear what the others are saying and for everything that's said to be heard easily on the tape.
- Sometimes I'll go around the table and ask everyone for their input. At other times, I will just throw a topic open for general discussion.
- Participation -- we need to get a full range of opinions, and we need everyone's participation. You are here to talk. I am here to listen.
- No evaluation -- there are no right and wrong answers. We expect differences in how people see things, and we need to know about these differences.
- Feel free to disagree or question each other. The purpose of a group session is that we learn things in group interchanges that we don't get out of one-on-one discussions. If someone says something you disagree with, please let us know.
- Some colleagues are present behind the one-way mirror. They want to hear what you have to say about the topics, but are not participating themselves.
- If you have a cellular phone, please turn it off. We don't want the group to be disturbed and we also need your full attention during the session
- The session will last about two hours.

## **INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

Let's go around the table. Please introduce yourself (first name only).

How many of you have been in a focus group before?

### **Process of Ordering the Marker**

Everyone here has ordered a headstone or marker for a veteran who has passed. Let's talk about the process of ordering the marker.

Could you start by telling us about what you needed to do to order the marker?

Can you remember what information you needed or what documentation you needed to present to be able to order a marker?

Can you say more about that?

Did you order a Bronze or a Stone Marker?

### **FAX Process**

You said that you ordered the marker by sending a FAX. Can you tell us more about that?

Who else ordered by sending a FAX?

Can you tell us what you had to do to place the order by FAX?

### **Telephone Process**

You said that you ordered over the telephone. Can you tell us more about that?

Who else ordered by making a phone call?

Where did the phone call go?

Who answered the phone?

What else happened when you were on the phone with the MPS agent?

What type of information did you need to provide?

Was this information that you could readily provide?

Where did you turn to get the information?

**E-Inquiry**

Did anyone request assistance or information by sending an email?

How long did it take you to get a response?

Was the response helpful?

**Presidential Memorial Certificate**

Did anyone here receive a Presidential Memorial Certificate?

Were you expecting it?

Did you request it?

How did you know that it was available to you?

Who told you about it?

Can you tell us what you needed to do to receive it?

What did it look like when you received it?

Did it take a long time to receive it?

**Talking with a Call Center Agent**

You said that you had called the telephone number -- what happened then?

Where did you get the number?

How did you know who you were talking with?

How long did it take?

What type of information were you given?

How many times did you have to call?

Did anyone call and NOT speak with a representative?

**Receiving the Marker**

Once you completed the order – What happened then?

Did you have to wait to receive it?

Did you have any idea of how long it would take to receive it?

Did you make any calls, write any letters, send any emails about the marker while you were waiting to receive it? What happened then?  
Where was it delivered?

Did it require any additional transportation or handling?

How did you know that the marker had been received?

How did you know it had been set at the grave?***The Postcard***

Did anyone receive a postcard from VA regarding your order?

Can you tell us about the postcard?

How long did it take to arrive?

What type of information was on it?

Was the information on it correct?

Would you say the postcard was helpful or not so helpful?

What makes you say that?

### ***Inscription Policy***

How did you decide what would be on the marker: the inscription?

Is there any issue about what can go on the marker?

Can you say more about that?

### ***Quality of the Marker***

When the marker arrived, how did it look to you?

Cut

Polish

Color

Finish of the stone

Depth of the inscription

Can you say something about the workmanship, the condition it arrived in?

[Look for indications that it was chipped, uneven, discolored, damaged, or suffered from poor workmanship.]

### ***Wrap Up***

Is there anything else you can tell us about your experience with ordering the grave marker?