

Focus Group Moderator's Guide

Focus Group Moderator's Guide Stage 2 Treatment Group Participants

Introduction

Welcome. Thank you for joining us today.

My name is _____, and I work for a company called Abt Associates/Mathematica. We do research on benefits and services for people with disabilities, including those on SSDI.

We are here today because we are doing a study on the Benefit Offset National Demonstration, known as BOND. This study is sponsored by the Social Security Administration.

We are holding many discussion groups like this around the country with people who can join BOND to learn how they view the program and why they feel that way.

What we learn from you today will help SSA do a better job of serving individuals with disabilities through its benefit programs.

Procedures

Before we begin, let me tell you about how our group will work.

- We will meet today for about 1½ hours.
- We want to keep the discussion informal and relaxed, so we will use first names. You should feel free to respond to me, or to others in the group.
- Today, you are the experts, and we are here to learn from you.
- I will direct our discussion, and I encourage everyone to think carefully about my questions and to share your thoughts with the group.
- I will ask questions in a couple of different ways. Most often I will ask a question and open it up for group discussion.
- Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers, and you should feel free to let us know if something is not clear.
- As I said, we want to hear from everyone, but please be careful not to talk all at once. We don't want to miss anything that you say.
- Our group is being audio taped, and transcripts of these tapes will be used to write our reports. None of our reports will include any information that identifies you. Everything you say is completely confidential, only for the use of this study.
- Taking part in this study will have no effect on your rights or benefits under SSDI. Your participation in this group is voluntary, and there is no risk to you in participating.
- I want to let you know that I am not an expert on SS disability, Medicare, or Medicaid. So I cannot answer questions or give advice about SSDI benefits or your personal circumstances.

Does anyone have any questions about anything I have said so far?

Participant Introductions

Let's begin by introducing ourselves.

- a. Please tell us your first name only, and [how long you have an SSDI beneficiary]
- b. Please also tell us if you are working right now, if you are in the process of looking for a job, or if you are receiving any employment-related services.

1. Employment Opportunities and Barriers

What employment opportunities are available to people with disabilities in this area?

- How adequate are these opportunities?
- What is needed?

What are the most significant barriers to work that you and other people with disabilities face?

In your opinion, how adequate are employment support resources for assisting people with disabilities, in general, and SSDI beneficiaries, in particular?

2. Awareness of the Demonstration

How did you learn about the Benefit Offset National Demonstration program?

- Who told you about the program?
- When did you hear about it?
- What were you told? How much information did you receive?
- Were you working at that time?

If not, had you worked previously? What was the main reason that you were not working at that time?

Did you attend any type of individual or group meeting or orientation to learn more about the demonstration program?

- If so, what were you told at that time about how to participate?
- How clearly was the program explained? Was the information sufficient? If not, what was confusing or unclear?

- What additional information might have been helpful to you?

How could the initial contact and information about the demonstration be improved?

3. Experience with the Work Incentives Counseling Service Provider

Each of you have been assigned to a work incentives counselor. This is someone who helps you figure out how much you can earn without losing your benefits. They may also help you find a job.

Please tell me about your experience with [*name of WIC/EWIC provider in the service area*].

- What services were available to you? What services did you use?
- For those who used these services, what services were most helpful to you? Why? What services were least helpful? Why?
- For those who didn't use these services, what might have encouraged you to use the services (e.g., flexible hours, more accessible location, different types of services, shorter wait times)?

4. Relationship with the Work Incentives Counselor

Tell me about your work incentives counselor.

- When did you first meet with them? Who initiated the meeting?
- How often do you communicate with them? How do you typically communicate (e.g., telephone, in-person, e-mail)? For what purposes do you communicate?
- How useful has your work incentives counselor been with helping you get and keep a job? What has been most helpful? What has been least helpful?

5. Employment Patterns

How has the BOND demonstration influenced your decision to work?

- Are you working now as a result of the demonstration? If so, what part of the demonstration has been most beneficial, the benefit offset, the work incentives counseling, or both?
- Are you actively looking for employment? If so, what has motivated you to seek employment? What additional resources do you need to get a job?

What additional resources/supports or policy changes might encourage more beneficiaries to go to work?

6. Wrap Up

What has been your overall experience with the demonstration?

- What have you liked best? What have you liked least?
- Would you recommend the demonstration to other beneficiaries? Why or why not?

What advice would you give to SSA about the demonstration? About moving beneficiaries to work?

We have talked about a lot of issues today. Is there anything that you would like to add?

Thank you for taking part in this discussion.