

Child Welfare Information Gateway Focus Group Template for Gathering Information about a Specific Product or Service

Purpose:

Learn more about the information needs of child welfare and related professionals and evaluate the usefulness of a specific product, tool, or topic so Child Welfare Information Gateway can better meet their needs and support their work in improving services and outcomes for children and families.

How the information will be used:

- *Inform Product Development regarding the content (topics, level of detail) of new and updated products to meet the information needs of these customer groups*
- *Inform Outreach about how to make these audiences aware of relevant Child Welfare Information Gateway products and services*
- *Inform Library Services about the types and formats of materials to acquire to meet the information needs of these customers*
- *Inform Website Services about the content, organization, and presentation of information to meet the needs of these customers around a specific topic, tool, or product*
- *Inform Management about staff development needs for Child Welfare Information Gateway staff to better serve these customers*

Participants:

- *Public child welfare agency administrators, supervisors, managers and direct service staff*
- *Community agency (including child welfare and related professionals) administrators, supervisors, managers and direct service staff*
- *Other related professionals that work in areas that overlap with child welfare such as mental health, domestic violence and substance abuse*

Introduction (10 minutes)

Introduce leaders of the focus group and roles of each in supporting the meeting. Then explain the following to participants:

We are conducting focus groups with professionals to better understand your experiences with *<insert name of product, tool, topic>* in order to determine 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. Any input gathered will not be attributed to you individually, but will be combined with others for a fuller picture of the issues. We are 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 there are any concerns about this process.

This focus group involves having you answer a few questions to learn about your experiences with *<insert name of product, tool, topic>*, what you thought was particularly useful/helpful and how Information Gateway can make it more relevant to the work you do. There are no wrong

answers—we want your honesty and we expect differences of opinion. And there are no bad questions so please feel free to speak up. The only limitation is to help us stay on time so we can cover all our questions.

Let's do brief introductions—please give us your name and what you do.

Have you heard of the Child Welfare Information Gateway? [SHOW OF HANDS]

Briefly 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 the connection to the best 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. Annually, Information Gateway receives over 4 million visitors to its website, processes over 100,000 print orders, responds to over 4,000 phone calls and emails, manages a library of over 60,000 items, writes or updates over 50 products each year and exhibits at more than 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 *<insert name of product, tool, topic>*, including what revisions needs to be made, what changes we need to make in our outreach and dissemination methods, as well as about what new products and services need to be developed to better support you in your work with children and families.

Any questions before we begin?

(If focus group participants do not have experience with the tool under review, please spend some time (e.g. 10 minutes) showing them the tool on the website and how it works. Please encourage them to ask questions and make comments about what they see and do not see as you are showing them the tool)

*Explain the notecards we are using so they won't be influenced by colleagues in the focus group and how the information on the notecards will be used to help generate discussion regarding the *<insert name of product, tool, topic>*. Then read the instructions to participants below and let them start.*

Instructions to Participants: Think about your previous experience with reading, using, or learning about *<insert name of product, tool, topic>*. If you don't have previous experience with this *<product, tool, or topic>*, think about what we just showed you and how it could be used in your work. Write your answers on the notecard. Then we'll discuss them and write some notes on the flipchart. **(5 minutes writing; 15 minutes discussing)**

Notecard says:

Think about your experience with reading/using/learning about <insert name of product, tool, topic>.

- a. Was the information/tool easy to understand and user-friendly? How so? If it was difficult to use, how so?
- b. How do you feel about the way the information is displayed on the website or page? What do you like about it? What do you dislike?
- c. How did you or would you use the information/tool? How was it or would it be helpful?
- d. How did you learn about this tool or resource (e.g., from a conference, your supervisor, etc.)? Where would you usually go to find this type of information, tool or topic?

When participants have responded to all questions on the notecard, go through each question individually and ask participants to share what they've written. As they are talking, write their answers on a flipchart. If participants don't speak up, feel free to call on someone and go around the room. During the conversation about each of the questions/responses on the notecard, you can probe for detail using the specific questions below. If participants create lists without conversations, you can use the questions below to extend the conversation. So as people are providing their thoughts, use the questions below to get them to expand upon their thoughts. Be very clear and focus the conversation on the product/tool of interest to get as much detail as possible.

- Specific feedback about content -
 - *Was this the type of information that you expected to see or were looking for? What was missing?*
 - *Was the information too advance/detailed or too basic?*
 - *How is the information applicable to your work?*
 - *Are there other topics that need tools similar to this one?*
 - *Are there other places that you already go to get this information? What do you like about them and dislike?*
 - *(For the Online Learning Center, ask the audience about each module—do they have experience with it; is it appropriate, what they expected or were looking for; and find out specific information about how it meets their needs or can be improved to do so.)*
- Usefulness –
 - *How is the tool helpful?*
 - *How is the tool not helpful?*
 - *Where will you use this tool and why?*
 - *If they won't need to use it, why? What do you need that is not here?*
 - *If there are specific aspects of the tool where feedback is needed –visit those aspects and ask these questions for each aspect.*
- Length, level of detail, format, layout – *What would make it easier to use and understand? Probe the applicable aspects below:*
 - *web page layout, length, format, readability*
 - *interactivity of the tool*
 - *length of information*
 - *content layout (e.g. bullets vs. paragraphs)*
 - *train-the-trainer instructions (Will this tool be used to train others? If instructions are there, are they clear? Are they needed?)*

- *For the Online Learning Center –ask about the activities and exercises provided to determine their helpfulness or what could make them work better?*
- *If there are specific aspects of the tool where feedback is needed–visit those aspects and ask these questions for each aspect.*
- Where they learned about the tool –
 - *Where did you learn about this tool (trainings, conferences, newsletters, and website)? If they mention anything specific, ask which one (e.g. which training, which conference, etc)?*
 - *Once you heard about it, was this tool easy to find? Is it accessible to everyone who might need it? If not, what should be changed?*
 - *Is there a better place to put this tool that users would find easier to locate?*

Closing (2 minutes)

We're done! Thank you very much for your time. Your input and comments are very helpful. Do you have any questions for us?

[Pass out a packet containing an Information Gateway flier and selected products, and encourage them to contact us. Mention the contact us information on the materials, and on the website, including live online chat.]