

DISCUSSION GUIDE
Go Direct Message Testing Focus Groups
Winter 2012

I. Introduction

15 minutes

- Moderator's introduction.
 - Introduce self and KRC Research.
 - KRC is conducting these groups on behalf of the Department of the Treasury, but KRC is an independent research firm and does not work for the Department of the Treasury or the Social Security Administration.
 - Explain focus groups, set ground rules:
 - No right or wrong answers.
 - Everyone should voice their opinions during the group.
 - It's okay to agree or disagree with each other.
 - Speak one at a time.
 - Turn off cell phones and pagers.
 - I'm just looking for your opinions about some of the things we'll be talking about. Everything you say is confidential as required by law and your names will not be associated with what you say. This discussion group is for research purposes only.
 - Inform participants we are audiotaping and videotaping the discussion and that observers are behind the one-way mirror.

- Participants' introduction.
 - Please go around the room and tell me your first name and some of the hobbies you like to do.

II. Warm-Up and Awareness

5 minutes

Today we are going to be talking about direct deposit. Before we get started, I'd like to ask you a few general questions.

- To start, where do you get most of your news about current events from? (**PROBE FOR MULTIPLE SOURCES.**)

- And where do you typically get information about how to manage your finances? (**PROBE:** News sources, people, organizations, friends/family).

- Who do you trust the most for information about how to manage your finances? Why?

III. Awareness of New Regulation

10 minutes

- Have you heard about the new regulation that will require all people receiving their federal benefit payments to receive their payments electronically? [**HAND COUNT**]
 - What have you heard about it?
- To get us all on the same page, here is an explanation of the regulation.

In December 2010, the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced that all people receiving federal benefit payments, like Social Security and SSI, will now be required to receive their payments electronically by March 2013.

*This new regulation gives three options to choose from: direct deposit into a checking or savings account at a bank, credit union, or other financial institution, a prepaid debit card called the **Direct Express® Debit MasterCard®** card, or by other electronic payment options such as a prepaid debit card.*

- Hearing this, how likely are you switch to an electronic payment in the next few months? Why or why not?
- And how likely are you to comply with the regulation and switch by March 2013? Why or why not?
- What questions, if any, do you have about this new regulation?

IV. Attitudes Toward Electronic Payments

10 minutes

- What does it mean to receive something through an electronic payment? How does it work?
- What do you think the benefits of an electronic payment might be for you personally?
- What concerns do you have about electronic payments? What are the drawbacks? (**PROBE FOR BARRIERS TO SWITCHING**).
- Have you heard about the **Direct Express® Debit MasterCard** card as a way to receive your benefit payment?
 - What have you heard about it?

- o How do you think it works?
 - o What do you think the benefits of the **Direct Express** card might be for you personally?
 - o What would be the drawbacks, if any, towards receiving your benefit payment this way?
- Are there any questions you have about the **Direct Express**[®] card? What are they?
 - How likely are you to use the **Direct Express** card? Why or why not?

V. Facts and Myths of Electronic Payments **15 minutes**

Now I am going to provide you with a handout with comments some people make about checks and electronic payments. Please read through each of the statements and select if you think that statement is a **FACT** or a **MYTH**. **[HANDOUT]**

[GO THROUGH EACH ONE SEPERATELY AND GET HAND COUNTS. FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL ITEM READ AND SHOW FACT ON FLASHCARD.]

Okay, let's start with the first one, how many people thought this was a fact?

[READ FACT]

- Is this statement believable? Why or why not?
- Does hearing this make you any more likely to switch to an electronic payment? Why or why not?

Electronic payments and direct deposit are the same thing.

Fact: Electronic payments and direct deposit are the same thing. When you make the switch to electronic payments, you will get your money by direct deposit to a bank or credit union account or the Direct Express[®] card account.

Fact

Myth

<p>Switching from paper checks to electronic payments is not easy and takes a long time.</p> <p>Fact: Making the switch is fast, easy and free. You can switch online at www.GoDirect.org or by calling the U.S. Treasury Electronic Payment Solution Center at (800) 333-1795 Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST. You can also sign up at your local bank or credit union (direct deposit only) or your local federal agency office.</p>	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>
<p>Electronic payments are sent over a computer where anyone can see them.</p> <p>Fact: Electronic payments, like direct deposit, allow the Department of Treasury to send your money in a safe way to your bank or credit union account or the Direct Express® card account. Your personal information is NOT sent over the Internet.</p>	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>
<p>You won't know when your money has arrived when you use electronic payments.</p> <p>Fact: With electronic payments, your money will be in your bank or credit union account or posted to the Direct Express card account on payment day each month. You can count on it. If you have the Direct Express card, you can sign up to get free text, phone or email alerts when your money goes into your card account.</p>	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>
<p>Checks are safer and more reliable than electronic payments.</p> <p>Fact: Electronic payments are safer and more reliable than paper checks. Money is sent straight from the Treasury Department to your bank or credit union account – or a Direct Express card account – on payment day, so there's no risk of lost or stolen checks.</p>	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>
<p>Checks are easier and more convenient than</p>	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>

electronic payments

Fact: Electronic payments are easier and more convenient than paper checks. There's no need to wait for the mail to arrive or to make a special trip to cash or deposit a check.

VI. Message Testing

20 minutes

Now I am going to provide you with a handout containing some reasons people say it is important to comply with the new rule requiring all federal benefit recipients to receive their payment by direct deposit into a checking or savings account or through the **Direct Express**[®] card.

After you read each statement, please rate each statement on a scale from 0 to 10 where a 10 means that statement makes you extremely likely to switch from a check payment to electronic payment and a 0 means that statement makes you extremely unlikely to switch from check to electronic payment. You can use any number between 0 and 10. After you have rated each statement, please put a star next to the one statement that makes you MOST likely to switch to an electronic payment. [HANDOUT]

HAND COUNT AND DISCUSS TOP STATEMENTS.

- What about that statement motivates you to switch from paper check to either direct deposit or the **Direct Express**[®] card?
- Were there any statements that would not convince you to switch to an electronic payment? Which ones? Why?

VII. Insert Testing Discussion

20 minutes

I am going to hand each of you an envelope with insets like you might receive along with your Social Security check.

I would like you to take a look at each insert. After you've looked at them all, choose the two to three inserts that are MOST appealing to you and place them on top of the pile. Then put the other inserts back into the envelope.

[HAND COUNT MOST APPEALING INSERTS AND DISCUSS TOP TWO OR THREE INSERTS, THEN DISCUSS REMAINING INSERTS]

- Why did you choose this insert? **[HOLD UP INSERT CHOSEN BY MOST PARTICIPANTS.]**
 - What stood out to you most about this one?

- What does it tell you about electronic payments like direct deposit or the **Direct Express**[®] card?
 - Is that important to you? Why or why not?
- How appealing is the insert? Would it grab your attention? Why or why not?
- If you saw this insert, how likely would you be to switch from a check payment to direct deposit or the **Direct Express**[®] card? Why?
- If you did decide to switch to direct deposit, which of the following would you most likely use – call the 1-800 number, fill out the form, sign up online, or go to your bank? Why?

VIII. Compliance and Barriers to Compliance **15 minutes**

- Now that you know a little more about the new regulation to switch to electronic benefit payments by March 2013 and the **Direct Express**[®] card, are you likely to comply with the new regulation between now and the next six months? [**HAND COUNT**] Why or why not?
- For those of you that aren't going to switch in the next six months, when do you plan to switch? [**HAND COUNT**]
 - Why are you going to wait (or not comply with the new regulation)?
 - What is preventing you from making the switch to an electronic payment option now?
 - What would encourage you to switch instead of waiting until just before the deadline?
- What is going to happen if you don't make the switch?
- Do you think you will choose to switch to direct deposit or the **Direct Express**[®] card?
 - What makes you choose that option?

IX. Conclusion **5 minutes**

- Based on what you've heard tonight, what would be the most compelling reason to switch from a check to direct deposit for your federal benefits soon?

REASONS TO COMPLY WITH NEW REGULATION

It's the law. The federal government is now requiring all federal benefit recipients to receive their payment by direct deposit or through another electronic payment option like the **Direct Express** card.

Make the switch to direct deposit or the **Direct Express** card now and enjoy the safety of electronic payments. These options eliminate the risk of stolen checks and forgeries, and help protect people from identity theft and fraud.

Electronic payments ensure benefit payments are protected from unforeseen events such as check delays or lost checks because of severe weather or disasters. The money will be in your bank account or on your debit card and can be accessed from virtually anywhere.

Stop waiting for your federal benefit check. With electronic payments, you have access to their money faster. The money is in your bank account or on your **Direct Express** card immediately on payment day. There is no need to wait for the mail.

People who do not switch to an electronic payment option by March 1, 2013, will receive their federal benefit payments on the **Direct Express** card and will not experience an interruption in payment.

Beat the rush and switch to direct deposit now. Join the 60 million people who already receive their federal benefit payments electronically before paper checks are eliminated.

Direct deposit is the most convenient way to receive your federal benefit payment. Your money goes directly to your bank account or debit card on payment day so you don't have to go to the bank or another location to cash or deposit your check.

Your paper check is costing American taxpayers' money. In 2009 alone, the government spent \$135 million in printing, processing and mailing costs for federal benefit checks. The requirement that all federal benefit recipients receive their money electronically by direct deposit or other electronic options like the **Direct Express** card will save American taxpayers \$1 billion over the next ten years.

Fact or Myth?

Please read each statement of the following statements and select if you think this statement is a fact or a myth.

Switching from paper checks to electronic payments is not easy and takes a long time.	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>
Electronic payments and direct deposit are the same thing.	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>
Electronic payments are sent over a computer where anyone can see them.	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>
You won't know when your money has arrived when you use electronic payments.	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>
Checks are safer and more reliable than electronic payments.	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>
Checks are easier and more convenient than electronic payments.	<i>Fact</i>	<i>Myth</i>