

Attachment 4

Student Focus Group Protocols and Consent Information

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0990- . The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average (1 hours)(30 minutes) per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate(s) or suggestions for improving this form, please write to: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, OS/OCIO/PRA, 200 Independence Ave., S.W., Suite 336-E, Washington D.C. 20201, Attention: PRA Reports Clearance Officer

Student Email Invitation

[DATE]

Dear [STUDENT NAME],

In an effort to gain knowledge about the Health Information Technology (IT) Workforce program being implemented at [INSERT CC NAME] and other community colleges across the United States, we are asking you to participate in the Health IT Workforce Program Evaluation. This study is being conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) on behalf of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

We are setting up a focus group discussion for students who enrolled in the Health IT academic programs and would greatly appreciate your participation. The 90 minute meeting will take place online by way of web-conference with approximately 8 students attending. The goal of this dynamic group discussion is to gather information in the form of opinions and viewpoints from you and other Health IT students on your experiences regarding the program, curriculum and course materials.

Your responses will help to improve the academic and career opportunities available in the future for individuals who enroll in Health IT programs. This is also an opportunity for you to voice your own opinion about the program and whether it sufficiently prepared you for the workforce. Your feedback and insight will help ONC to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program in preparing a well-trained workforce in the Health IT industry. As a token of our appreciation you will receive a \$50 gift card..

Please call [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] or e-mail [INSERT PROJECT EMAIL] to indicate your availability. Provide only your first name and your unique ID number [INSERT NORC SUID] along with the dates and times you are available. We will follow-up with a confirmation email with instructions, a project information sheet and the schedule.

Confidentiality. Please keep in mind that NORC maintains strict confidentiality standards. Your responses will be reported in summary form only and will be safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. Your individual data will not be shared with your school, employer or anyone else. Your participation in this group interview is voluntary.

Background Information. The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009 created the Workforce Program to support the development of Health IT education programs for the purpose of facilitating the creation of a robust workforce dedicated to the rapid and widespread adoption and use of health information technology. Additional information on Health IT Workforce and other HITECH programs may be found here: <http://healthit.hhs.gov>.

NORC at the University of Chicago has a long history of conducting high-quality social science research to inform public policy and promote the public interest.

Contact Us. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please e-mail us at [EMAIL ADDR] or call our toll-free number at [STUDY TOLL FREE]. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, you may call the NORC IRB Administrator; toll free, at 866-309-0542.

Again, thank you for your time and we look forward to further contact with you.
Sincerely,

Kristina Lowell, Ph.D.
Project Director
NORC at the University of Chicago

Student Email Invitation – Follow-up

[DATE]

Dear [STUDENT NAME],

Hopefully you have received our previous email inviting you to participate in a focus group discussion for students who enrolled in the Health IT academic program at community colleges across the nation. We would greatly appreciate your participation in this very important meeting and would like you to hear from you soon.

Please call [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] or e-mail [INSERT PROJECT EMAIL] to indicate your availability. Provide only your first name and your unique ID number [INSERT NORC SUID] along with the dates and times you are available. We will follow-up with a confirmation email with instructions, a project information sheet and the schedule.

The 90 minute meeting will take place online by way of web-conference with approximately 8 students attending. The goal of this dynamic group discussion is to gather information in the form of opinions and viewpoints from you and other Health IT students on your experiences regarding the program. As a token of our appreciation you will receive a \$50 gift card.

As a reminder, NORC at the University of Chicago (www.norc.org) on behalf of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (<http://healthit.hhs.gov>) is conducting a study to gain knowledge about the Health Information Technology (IT) Workforce Program being implemented at [INSERT NAME] and other community colleges offering the program. Your feedback and insight will help ONC to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program in preparing a well-trained workforce in the Health IT industry.

Confidentiality. Please keep in mind that NORC maintains strict confidentiality standard in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. Your individual data will not be shared with your school, employer or anyone else. Your participation in this group interview is voluntary.

Contact Us. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please e-mail us at [EMAIL ADDR] or call our toll-free number at [STUDY TOLL FREE]. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, you may call the NORC IRB Administrator; toll free, at 866-309-0542.

Again, thank you for your time and we look forward to further contact with you.
Sincerely,

Kristina Lowell, Ph.D.
Project Director

Student Confirmation Email

[DATE]

Dear [STUDENT NAME],

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Health IT Workforce **Student Focus Group Discussion** conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago on behalf of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services!

This email contains important information you will need to attend the online meeting.

The meeting is scheduled for [INSERT DAY], [INSERT DATE] at [INSERT TIME] at [INSERT LOCATION]. The meeting should take no more than 90 minutes. Please be prompt and arrive at least 5 minutes prior to start.

We have attached the Project Information Sheet that explains in detail the purpose of the focus group and your rights as a participant. You will need to read this document prior to participating in the focus group discussion.

The goal of this dynamic group discussion is to gather information in the form of opinions and viewpoints from you and other students who enrolled in the Workforce Program on your experiences regarding the program. Your feedback and insight will help ONC to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program in preparing a well-trained workforce in the Health IT industry.

If you have any questions or need additional information please do not hesitate to call us at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] or e-mail [INSERT PROJECT EMAIL].

We are excited to meet you and thank you again for your time and participation in this important study.

Sincerely,

Kristina Lowell, Ph.D.
Project Director

Confidentiality. Please keep in mind that NORC maintains strict confidentiality standards. Your responses will be reported in summary form only and will be safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. Your individual data will not be shared with your school, employer or anyone else. Your participation in this group interview is voluntary.

Project Information Sheet - Students

TITLE OF STUDY: Health Information Technology Workforce Program Evaluation

Project Director: Kristina Lowell, Ph.D.

Phone Number: [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]

You are asked to take part in a research study being conducted by the NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) – a not-for-profit company that conducts research in the public interest. NORC has been contracted by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation on their IT Professionals in Health Care Program. (We will refer to it as the Workforce Program.) An essential piece of this evaluation is to assess the Health IT academic and training programs that are being implemented by community colleges and universities across the nation.

Purpose:

The purpose of this research study is to further investigate the experiences of students enrolled in the Health IT academic program through focus group interviews. This qualitative research is designed to complement the existing surveys and to aid in the understanding of how effective the Health IT academic program is in achieving its goals.

Procedures:

Approximately 8 students will participate in a group discussion led by an NORC researcher. This discussion will be guided by the moderator so that topics relevant to the students' experiences with health IT academic programs are explored in detail. There will be opportunities for all participants to voice any comments or concerns they have about any aspect of the program or its impact on their lives. This group session will be recorded and transcribed to help us remember what is said during the discussion and to make sure comments are captured accurately. Your participation in the Focus Group discussion will last for approximately 90 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts:

You may choose not to answer any question you do not feel comfortable answering. You may choose to end your participation in this discussion at any time.

Benefits:

Your statements will be used to identify areas for possible improvement to the Health IT academic programs. They will also be used to better understand the needs and experiences of students like you. The goal of the study is to understand how to better meet your needs as a student in the Health IT programs and as a member of the Health IT workforce. Your answers may also be used to make improvements to the management and implementation of the Health IT curriculum.

Confidentiality:

No participants will be identified by name in any report or publication of this study or its results. Your responses and comments will be reported in summary form only and your data is safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. NORC is obligated under law to protect your identity. Your comments will remain absolutely confidential, meaning we will not share what you specifically have to say with anyone. Your responses will in no way impact your current employment, your ability to attain employment, your education, career or any other life event. Additionally, as a participant of this group, you are bound by this obligation not to share information that you hear during this meeting with anyone outside of the group.

Recordings and transcriptions that contain references to your name, as well as lists of participants, will be stored securely by NORC and will not be shared outside of the NORC research team. All electronic files will be stored on NORC's secure servers, and if paper files are created they will be stored under lock and key or shredded after use.

Payments to Participants:

You will receive a \$50 gift card for your participation in this study. Should you withdraw from the study prior to completion, or should the investigator terminate your participation prior to completion, you will still receive this incentive.

Right to refuse or to withdraw from the study:

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, or may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty, or losing benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. NORC has the right to stop your participation in the study at any time.

Offer to Answer Questions:

You have the opportunity to ask, and to have answered, all your questions about this research. If you have other questions, or if a research-related injury occurs, you may call the project director, Dr. Kristina Lowell, at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER].

Institutional Review Board Approval:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of Human Subjects at NORC. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, you may call the NORC IRB Administrator, toll free, at 866-309-0542.

Health IT Workforce Program Evaluation Student Focus Group Guide

- **Overview, 5 minutes**
- **Consent Statement, 5 minutes**
- **Group Introductions, 5 minutes**
- **Group Discussion, 70 minutes**
- **Conclusion and wrap-up, 5 minutes**

I. Overview (5 minutes)

Welcome, everyone, to this very important meeting concerning the academic training you have all received as part of the Health IT Workforce Program and thank you so much for taking the time to participate. My name is [INSERT NAME] and I am with NORC at the University of Chicago. We are working with the Office of National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (or “ONC”) in the Department of Health and Human Services. NORC has been contracted by ONC to conduct an evaluation of the Health IT academic and training programs that are being offered by community colleges and universities across the nation. This is going to be an interactive discussion and I will be facilitating today’s meeting.

We have asked you and others enrolled in the Health IT Workforce Program to participate in a dynamic group discussion to share your experiences, opinions, and feedback regarding the program. The goal of this meeting is to gather information that will help evaluate the effectiveness of the program in preparing a well-trained workforce in the Health IT industry. Your participation, insight and feedback will help ONC refine the program to make it more useful for future students, employers, and others.

Before we begin the discussion, I’d like to take just a few minutes to make sure everyone here is clear about the protocol and objectives for today’s meeting.

My role as facilitator is to ask questions that will encourage discussion and facilitate a good exchange of opinions and ideas from everyone here. I will make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak, keep us focused and on topic. It is my goal to provide a safe, neutral and secure environment for you to talk freely and openly express your opinions, thoughts and viewpoints.

Your role as a participant is to answer the questions as honestly as possible. You might want to jot down your thoughts on a piece of paper in case you get distracted when others speak. You may provide a new idea or response for the group to discuss, expand on another’s answer, or disagree, respectfully of course. Most important to the success of the discussion is to hear as many views on the subject as possible. We prefer for the discussion to evolve into a dynamic and interactive conversation among all of you.

II. Consent Statement (5 minutes)

Now I would like to take a few minutes to review the Project Information Sheet that was emailed to you. Approximately 8 students will participate in today's meeting. The meeting will last for approximately 90 minutes. This group session will be recorded and transcribed to help us remember what is said during the discussion and to make sure comments are captured accurately but without real names or other identifying information. Please bear in mind that, even if you previously agree to be taped you do not have to respond to a particular question if you feel uncomfortable doing so. Only NORC researchers assigned to this study will be listening to the recordings as they will help us write a report about the key findings from these discussions.

NORC is obligated under law to protect your identity and will not include your name or anything that identifies you in any report we write. Your responses and comments will be reported in summary form only and your data are safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. Your comments will remain absolutely confidential, meaning we will not share what you specifically have to say with anyone. Additionally, as a participant of this group, you are bound by this obligation not to share information that you hear during this meeting with anyone outside of the group.

Finally, I will remind you that your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, or may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty, or losing benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. Your responses will in no way impact your current employment or your ability to attain employment in the future. You may refrain from answering questions and choose to end your participation in this discussion at any time. As a token of our appreciation you will receive a \$50 gift card.

Does anyone have any questions? If you should have any questions during or after the discussion or if a research-related injury occurs, you may call the project director, Dr. Kristina Lowell at [301-634-9488].

Does everyone agree to participate?
Does everyone agree to be recorded?

III. Introductions (5 minutes)

Let's take a few minutes to introduce ourselves to each other. Please tell your first name only, the health IT role or roles for which you were trained, and what community college you attended for this training. I'll start. My name is _____. While I am not currently working in the field of health IT, I have a background in [insert field of study or professional experience].

Do you have any questions? Let's begin.

IV. Group Discussion (70 minutes)

A. Topic: Evaluation of Program Courses and Materials

First, let's talk about the courses you have taken as part of the program as well as the course materials and your motivation for enrolling.

approx 20 minutes

1) Enrollment/Recruitment

- a. To start the conversation, we thought it would be helpful to know a little more about your background prior to joining the program. So I'd like to go around the room and have everyone tell us a little about your educational background and/or work experience in IT, health care, or health IT prior to enrolling in your program.
- b. How did you learn about the program? Why did you decide to enroll?
- c. For which workforce role or roles did you choose to receive training? What motivated you to choose this role?

2) Courses

- a. Do you feel that the courses gave you a clear understanding of the subject matter? If not, can you share the gaps or areas that were not clear?
- b. Do you think the courses fit together to form a coherent program targeted to one of the six Workforce roles? If not, do you have any ideas on how this could have been done more effectively?

3) Course Materials

- a. Thinking about the classes you took as part of the program, were the assigned readings and course materials helpful? If not, can you provide a suggestion or two to improve the readings or course materials?

4) Instructors

- a. Thinking about the class instructors you have encountered while in the program, how do you feel about the instructors in general? Did you feel that they were knowledgeable about the subject matter? On the whole, do you think that your instructors were effective teachers?

B. Topic: Job Placement

We'd like to switch gears a bit and discuss the extent to which the program prepared you for employment in the health IT industry.

approx 25 minutes

1) For those of you who have already entered the health IT workforce:

- a. Please tell us a little about the type of work you are doing. Are you working in the same type of role you prepared for in the program?

- b. Did your school help you find this job? How?
 - c. Based on your experience in your current position thus far, did the program prepare you well for the job? If so, in what ways? If not, how could the program have better prepared you?
- 2) For those of you currently looking for a position:
- a. Do you feel well-prepared for a position in the health IT field? If so, in what ways did the program help prepare you? If not, why did the program not meet this goal?
 - b. What specific challenges, if any, have you encountered in your job search?
 - c. Some of you may have used the job-placement services at your school. For those of you who did, have you found them to be helpful? If so, in what way? If they were not helpful, what could have been better? For those of you who have not use your school's job-placement services, why have you not done so?
- 3) Are you planning to take (or have you already taken) the Competency Exam [BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EXAM WILL BE ADDED AT A LATER DATE]? Why or why not? Do you think this exam will help you in the workplace? If so, how?

C. Topic: Overall Thoughts and Recommendations

Now I'd like to ask you for your overall thoughts on your experiences in the program as well as suggestions and recommendations for improving the program.

approx 25 minutes

- 1) Overall Thoughts
- a. Thinking about your expectations prior to starting your training in this program, would you say that the program was what you expected? Was it more helpful? Less helpful? How so?
 - b. How satisfied are you with your overall experience with the program?
- 2) Recommendations
- a. What has been the best aspect of the program?
 - b. What has been the worst aspect of the program?
 - c. What changes, if any, would you make to improve the overall program experience?

V. Conclude (5 minutes)

This concludes our group session. Does anyone have any questions? On behalf of NORC and ONC, I'd like to thank you again for participating in this stimulating group discussion. If you have any questions later on, please feel free to contact us either by email or phone. [INSERT STUDY EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER]