

Appendix D3

Focus Group Protocol: English



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HIP FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL: ENGLISH

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to help us out today. You were all invited to this discussion because you are participating in DTA's Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP) program here in Hampden County. The reason for this discussion is to find out about your experiences with learning about and using the program and your EBT card. My name is _____. I will be leading the session today. I work for Westat, a company based in Rockville, MD that conducts research on many different topics for a variety of government agencies. We are working with another company called ABT Associates and completing this work for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

SNAP clients in Hampden County are the only ones in the country to participate in this program, so we need to learn from you how it's working. There are no wrong answers to any of the questions that I am planning to ask. In fact, some of you may have had different experiences than each other - so if someone describes a personal experience that is different from your own, please feel free to share how your experience was different.

Before we get started there are a few things I should mention. This is a research project, and your participation is voluntary. You may leave at any time during the session. When you leave today, _____ is in the lobby. She will ask you to complete a short form and will give you \$75.00 for participating in today's session.

Your participation is also anonymous. Our report to the USDA/FNS will include the ideas that you all share with me today, but not your names. For the most part, the report will have statements such as "Three people said." Sometimes we do include quotes that people say. If we do, we will not use your name in any reports. We won't share your names with DTA or USDA/FNS, except as required by law - they are interested in **what** gets said, not who said what.

Participating in this study will not affect your SNAP benefits, HIP participation, or any other benefits you may be receiving. Also, it will not affect any benefits you might receive in the future.

This is _____ and s/he will be taking notes. In addition, we need to audio record this focus group session. This helps me so I can listen better to what you are saying and help us make sure that our notes are complete. We will destroy the file when our project is finished. In addition, we will also destroy the electronic record of your responses and any identifying information when the project ends.

I will look at your name tags and call on you by your first name. However, when studying the transcripts from today's session, it is helpful for me to know when we change speakers. So, please identify yourself when you speak so that we have that on tape. You may just use your first name or your initials, or make up a name for today's session, as long as you use the same name throughout the session.

If you haven't helped yourself to refreshments, please feel free to do so now OR anytime during the next 90 minutes. If you need a restroom, they are located _____. Please feel free to step out if you need to, but don't all leave at once!

Close-ended Questionnaire

Before we get started with the discussion, I would like for you all to fill in this brief questionnaire - this will answer some of our questions so we will have more time for broader discussion. (5-7 minutes)

HIP PRE-FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

1) Approximately how much is the monthly incentive that your household earns from HIP? \$_____

2) In general, where do you do most of your shopping? [**SELECT ONLY ONE**]

- Supermarkets, grocery stores, warehouse club stores
- Farmer's Markets
- Convenience stores (such as 7-11 or mini-mart)
- Ethnic stores (such as mercados or Asian markets)

3) Where do you shop most often for fruits and vegetables? [SELECT ONLY ONE]

- Supermarkets, grocery stores, warehouse club stores
- Farmer's Markets
- Convenience stores (such as 7-11 or mini-mart)
- Ethnic stores (such as mercados or Asian markets)

4) Do you know at which stores you can earn your HIP rebate?

No **[SKIP TO 5]**

Yes → Where do you shop when you want to earn your HIP rebate?
[SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

Supermarkets, grocery stores, warehouse club stores

Farmer's Markets

Convenience stores (such as 7-11 or mini-mart)

Ethnic stores (such as mercados or Asian markets)

5) Please answer each of the following about HIP-eligible items at the stores where you shop.

	Alwa ys	Someti mes	Neve r
There are signs indicating the stores accept SNAP or HIP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There are signs indicating items that are HIP-eligible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The stores are carrying more fruits & vegetables	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prices for fruits & vegetables have increased since I started using HIP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can find HIP items on sale	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am satisfied with the number of different HIP-eligible items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6) When are fruits or vegetables being eaten at your home? **[SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]**

Breakfast

Lunch

Dinner

Snacks

DISCUSSION

I am going to turn the tape recorder on now.

I would like to start by having everyone introduce themselves. Please just use your first name, or if you prefer, tell me your initials. I would also like to know a little about who lives in your household. Please share with the group the number of people who live in your home and whether they are family members or friends, housemates, etc. We do not need to know the names of these people.

Thanks. Let's get started.

1. How did you first learn about HIP?

- Where did you first hear about the HIP program (mail? Newspaper? DTA case manager?). What did you hear/read at that time?
- How did you learn that your household would participate in HIP?
 - How much time had passed since the very first time you had heard about HIP until the time that you learned you were chosen for HIP?
- What were your thoughts, if any, when you learned that your household would participate in HIP?

2. What kind of information or training did you receive before starting HIP?

- How helpful was the information/training?
- What information wasn't covered, but that you think would have been useful to you?
- What could have been done to better help you understand or learn about HIP?

[IF NEEDED: What situations have you run into that you think maybe could have been addressed in training?]

3. How easy or difficult has it been for you to use HIP? Explain.

4. What role has the HIP incentive had in your household?

- What, if any, changes have there been to your household budget since you began using HIP?
- To what extent do you plan ahead for shopping trips when you're going to use your EBT card? Tell me more about that.

- 5. As you know, there is a cap on the incentive for fruits and vegetables. What do you think about this spending cap? [IF NEEDED - Do you think there should be a spending cap? Explain]**
- How do you know when you are near or have reached your limit?
 - How often do you reach this limit? {IF NEEDED - Do you intentionally aim to reach this limit?}

6. What have your check-out experiences been like when you've bought fruits and vegetables with your SNAP EBT card? [PROBE AS NEEDED]

- Does it take longer for you to check out when you use the SNAP EBT card? Why do you think that is? [PROBE AS NEEDED]
 - o Have you been asked to separate your fruits and vegetables at the checkout counter? What was that experience like for you? [PROBE FOR ANY NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES]
 - o Has anyone had an experience where you picked up an item that you thought was eligible but then were told it was not? How did you handle it in the store? [Buy it? Put it back?] Did you have a number you could call to try to resolve the issue once you got home? Explain.
 - o How well has the HIP sleeve/card holder for the EBT card worked for you? Explain.
- What comments, if any, have you heard from your check-out clerk or other customers?
- Have you experienced any problems receiving the incentive for eligible items? Explain. How did you attempt to resolve it?
- What experiences have you had asking questions about the balance remaining on your card?
- To what extent have your experiences using HIP affected your shopping habits? [PROBE AS NEEDED - avoid some stores? Plan ahead?]

7. Describe the ways in which your household's consumption of fruits and vegetables has changed since you started the HIP program. [PROBE - Increased? Different?]

- Can you say something about changes in your consumption? Other adults in the household? Your children's consumption? [PROBE AS NEEDED]
- Can you say something about changes in the type for fruits and vegetables you purchase? The amount for fruits and vegetables you purchase? The frequency of fruit and vegetable purchases?

- What other changes in eating habits, if any, have you noticed among members of your household? [PROBE AS NEEDED]
 - Change in amount of “junk food” available? [ASK WHAT CONSTITUTES ‘JUNK FOOD’ FOR RESPONDENT]
- In what ways have your household income and expenses changed since starting the HIP program?

8. What are some specific changes you would like to see with HIP?

9. What is the biggest change for your household as a result of HIP?

Explain.

[PROBE IF NECESSARY]

- Positive changes to purchasing/eating habits? [PROBE – Do you think this will continue after HIP? Why/not?]
- Family eating a healthier diet? [PROBE IF NEEDED – In what ways is it healthier?]
- More disposable income for other household purchases?

10. Did the HIP program meet your expectations? Why/why not?

Thank you for sharing your time and thoughts with us today. We truly appreciate your joining us.