

Tribal TANF Participants Focus Group

[Discussion group participants will be recruited with the assistance of tribal TANF staff. Participants will be at least 18 years of age and will be current or former participants in the Tribal TANF program. Tribal TANF staff will be asked to recruit 10-12 adult heads-of-households to ensure at least 5 actual participants per group. One discussion group will be held in each of the 4 study sites.]

Introduction and Consent

Thank you for coming and agreeing to participate in this group discussion today.

Who are we? I'm [name]; I will be your moderator for the session. I'm a researcher from the [Urban Institute, a non-profit research organization OR Support Services International, an Indian-owned consulting firm] located in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. With me today is [name and affiliation].

Why am I here? You have been invited to join this group because you have had experience with the [TANF program]. [NOTE: WHEREVER "TANF" APPEARS IN THIS GUIDE, THE MODERATOR SHOULD USE THE LOCAL TRIBAL TANF PROGRAM'S NAME IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE.] The Urban Institute asked [local TANF program] to invite people to participate in this group. The Institute, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is studying how tribal TANF programs are being implemented in order to provide services for tribal members.

We are visiting 4 communities and will be speaking with community leaders, staff of tribal TANF and other organizations, and you to better understand the issues in the study sites.

What is a discussion group? Discussion groups are a way to find out what people think about an issue through group discussion. We are interested in learning about your ideas, feelings, and opinions about TANF in [community]. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to know what you think. You should feel free to disagree with each other; we hope to hear as many points of view as possible in response to the questions I'll ask. Your participation is very important to the success of this study.

What happens with the information shared during the group? We will use what we learn today and from other interviews and discussion groups to contribute to a report describing the 4 tribal TANF programs we visit. This report will be submitted to HHS to inform the federal government about the diverse characteristics and promising practices of tribal TANF programs.

A Descriptive Study of Tribal TANF Programs
Guide for Interviews with Administrators of Tribal TANF Programs

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How does this work? The session today should last about two hours. At the end of this session, we will ask you to complete a short, anonymous background information form. We will also give you \$25 for being here today and will ask you to sign a receipt indicating you have received this payment.

I may remind you occasionally to speak one at a time so that we can hear your comments. I am your guide, but this is a group discussion; everyone should feel free to speak. To keep us on schedule, I may change the subject or move ahead. Please stop me if you have something to add.

Are there any questions before we begin? We'll start by going over the consent to participate.

Privacy Statement *[Interviewer must read this]:*

Participation in this discussion group is voluntary, which means that you don't have to participate and you can decide not to answer any specific questions. There are no consequences for choosing not to participate or not to answer any question. You can also leave the group at any point. You will receive a [CASH GIFT/ GIFT CARD/VOUCHER] as a token of appreciation for being here today. The group discussion will last about two hours.

We will keep the information you provide private and will not be share it with anyone except for research staff working on the study. This includes anything that can identify you such as your name, address, or telephone number. Information is never repeated with the name of a participant in any reports or in any discussions with program staff or HHS. When we write our reports and discuss our findings, information from all the people we speak with is compiled and presented so that no one person can be identified. Everyone who works on this survey has signed a legal document stating they will not reveal any of your personal information and can be severely penalized if they do. We cannot guarantee that what you say will not be repeated by others in this discussion group but we strongly urge each of you to respect the privacy of others in the group and not repeat anything you hear in this discussion outside the group.

We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we capture all of it. So, with your permission, we will be recording the session and/or [name of person] will be taking notes on a laptop computer. However, we destroy the recordings as soon as we have made complete notes of the meeting, and those notes will not use your names. Also, as we said, we will not use your names in preparing any reports and will disguise your comments so that no one can identify who made specific comments. We will ask you to sign for your incentive payment in order to account for our financial disbursements, but we pass on only a coded identifier, not your name, to our accounting department. Does anyone have an objection to recording this group?

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This data collection effort is authorized under 42 USC 612 and Section 412 of the Social Security Act for the purpose of describing how current Tribal TANF programs are operating, and what innovative programs are being implemented that can inform other Tribal TANF programs. We will use what we learn today and from other interviews to contribute to a report to HHS, participating tribes, and other tribes interested in operating TANF programs. This report will be released in the summer of 2013. Our study began in September 2011 and will end in September 2013. Your participation is voluntary and your statements are private to the extent permitted by law. This interview is not part of an audit or a compliance review. Your comments will not affect the program's management or your participation in the program.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

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DISCUSSION GROUP TOPICS

Icebreaker: Please tell us your first name and what types of supports and services you have received through the [TANF] program.

Supportive Services:

I would like to begin by hearing more about your experiences with the tribal TANF program.

- 1) In your experience, how easy or hard was it to get the services you needed, in terms of getting to the TANF office, understanding the program, working with people at the TANF office, etc.?
- 2) Does the office that helps you with TANF also help you get other supports, like food stamps, health services, job training, education, job search assistance?
 - a) If so, are those supports provided by the same office, or are you referred elsewhere for services? Which ones?
 - b) If you were referred elsewhere for other services, did the TANF office follow-up with you on whether you received those services?
 - c) Did the TANF program help you find a job? If so, how?
- 3) How did you learn about the TANF program? Do you think the program does enough to inform the community about its services? Why or why not?
- 4) How is the TANF program viewed in the community?
- 5) Do you feel that the TANF office and services reflect your Tribe's culture? Explain / Examples?

Context and Background

I would like to focus now on your community and the challenges and opportunities here.

- 6) Are there jobs available in this community? If so, what kinds of jobs are available? Do available jobs pay good wages?
- 7) What other resources besides TANF are available for social services, education, training, and employment? Do you believe activities accessible to everyone equally?

- 8) Are there job-training programs available in the area? If so, have you participated in them? Do you believe there is sufficient number of job and job training opportunities in this region?
- 9) When people are facing difficulties like domestic violence, substance abuse/addiction, or lack of safe affordable housing, which can make it especially difficult to get and keep a job, are there supports that can help someone address these issues? If so, are these supports provided by the TANF program or other programs?
 - a) Do you have a sense of whether difficulties like domestic violence, substance abuse/addiction, or lack of safe affordable housing are fairly common in your community? Are there other challenges facing your community?
- 10) What challenges have you faced related to finding and accessing work, services, and other resources?

Time Limits/Work Requirements

- 11) What is the time limit for receiving TANF benefits? Are there exceptions to the rule? Do you think this requirement is fair? Why/ Why not?
- 12) What are the work participation requirements of the TANF program? Are there exceptions to the rule? Do you think this requirement is fair? Why/ Why not?
- 13) What happens if a household does not meet its work requirements?
- 14) In addition to the work requirement, what other program rules can lead to penalties / sanctions? What happens when someone receives a penalty or is sanctioned?

Tribal and State TANF Programs

- 15) Have you ever switched between Tribal and state TANF programs? Why / not? [Probes: co-location of programs and services with WIC, FDPIR, health services, etc., program eligibility, interactions with staff, sanctions, etc.]
- 16) Do you know of people who have switched from one to the other? Why do you think they switched?
- 17) What are the most important differences between the Tribal and the state TANF programs?
- 18) Are there other differences between the programs? [Probes: program offerings, eligibility terms, penalties, staff]

Wrap-up (Outputs and Outcomes)

19) Has the tribal TANF program made a difference for you and your family?

- a) If so, what part of the TANF program has been the biggest help to you and your family?

If you could alter the TANF programs to better meet your needs, how would you do this?

Thank you.

Ask participants to sign a stipend receipt and background information form.