

### Appendix B-3: INTRODUCTORY SCRIPT--FOCUS GROUPS

*Note: Two discussion groups will be held in each of the case study sites. If possible, the two groups will differ from each other based on reason for case closure and other case characteristics available in administrative data.*

Thank you for coming to this group discussion today. Your participation is very important to this study.

**Who are we?** I'm [name], a researcher on the Urban Institute's [or MEF Associates'] study team; I will be your moderator for the session. The Urban Institute [or MEF Associates] is a non-profit research organization located in the Washington, DC area that studies government programs and makes recommendations to improve them. Helping me today is [name].

**Why were you invited to this group?** You have been invited to join this group because you are someone who has had the experience of losing SNAP benefits and reapplying within a few months—that is, food stamps [*customize discussion guide to include the local name for SNAP*]. Is that true for everyone here? Have you all received SNAP benefits at one time, then stopped for a while and then later started receiving them again? [*If anyone does not qualify for the focus group, thank them for their time and let them know that the discussion is for people who have “churned.”*] We call that process of losing SNAP benefits and reapplying within a few months “churning.” Our research team, on behalf of the Federal Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, which operates SNAP, is studying the patterns, causes and costs of churning. We are analyzing data on this issue and also talking with SNAP administrators, caseworkers, community-based organizations (like [*name of CBO in this community*]), and SNAP participants like you to better understand the issue of churning. We are visiting 6 communities across the country. In addition to [this city] the other communities included in our study are \_\_\_\_\_.

**What is a discussion group?** Have any of you participated in a discussion group like this before? Discussion groups are a way to find out what people think about an issue through group discussion. We are interested in learning about your experiences and thoughts about why churning (losing SNAP benefits and reapplying within a few months) happens and what effect it has on you. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to know what you think and what your experience has been. You should feel free to disagree with each other; you might have had different experiences from each other. We hope to hear as many points of view as possible in response to the questions I'll ask. Please feel free to speak up: 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 help us write a report on the patterns, causes and costs of churning in SNAP. This report will be submitted to FNS to inform the federal government about SNAP churning, the policies and practices that might reduce churning, and the related costs to SNAP offices and recipients.

**How does this work?** The session today should last about 90 minutes. 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; Let's try to make sure that everyone has a chance to answer each question and that we listen to what each person has to say. To keep us on schedule, I may change the subject or move ahead. Please stop me if you have something to add. In the past, most people have told us that they enjoy these discussions because it gives them a chance to share their experiences and hear about other peoples' experiences.

At the end of this session, we will ask you to complete a short form with some background information about yourself to help us understand more about the people who participate in these discussion groups, but you will not be putting your name on the form. We will also give you \$30 in cash for participating today and will ask you to sign a receipt indicating you have received this payment. We will ask you to sign for your incentive payment in order to account for our finances, but we pass on only a coded identifier, not your name, to our accounting department.

**Privacy Statement** *[Interviewer must read this]:*

Participation in this discussion group is **voluntary**, which means that you do not 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. I want to stress that your participation is **not required** in order to continue receiving benefits or to receive them at any time in the future. You can also **leave the group at any point**. The group discussion will last about **90 minutes**.

The personal information you provide will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside the research staff working on the study, except as otherwise required by law. 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 FNS. When we write our reports and discuss our findings, information from all the people we speak with is put together and presented so that **no one person can be identified**. Everyone who works on this project has signed a legal document stating they will not reveal any of your personal information and can be severely penalized if they do. We also ask that you 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 [name of person] will be taking notes on a laptop computer. 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**. Does anyone have an objection to recording this group? During the discussion, if you would like to stop the recording while you make a particular comment, please let us know.

*[NOTE TO FACILITATORS: If anyone objects to recording the discussion, the researcher who is not leading the discussion group will need to take thorough notes. Anyone who chooses to leave the group at any time should be given the \$30 and sign to acknowledge receipt of the incentive. This should be done outside the room in which the focus group is occurring.]*

Do you have any questions before we begin?

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 0584-XXXX. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 5 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection.