

E-CIGARETTE FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR GUIDE

PATH ad hoc – E-cig and hookah formative research

NOTE -- ecig groups are online only

1. OVERVIEW

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a discussion about electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes. My name is _____ and I will be leading the session tonight. With me is _____, who will be taking notes and helping me with the discussion. _____ and I both work for Westat, a company based in Rockville, MD. Through a contract from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Westat is developing materials and questionnaire items for a study known as the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health or PATH Study. The PATH Study is a large national study to understand tobacco use and health among Americans.

Our interest is in being sure that people can understand and answer the questions we ask in the PATH Study. Because e-cigarette use is fairly new, people may think about it or talk about it in different ways. The questions and materials in the PATH Study need to reflect how people talk and think about this product. We hope to learn from you how we should ask about this product in the study questionnaires.

Today/tonight, we'll ask questions about your experiences using e-cigarettes, such as when you first started using e-cigarettes, what you like about using e-cigarettes, how often you use e-cigarettes, and why you use e-cigarettes. Just to be clear, I'll say "e-cigarette" today, but we also welcome comments about things like e-hookahs, e-cigars, and other personal vaping devices. Please let us know when you're talking about one of these devices rather than what you'd consider an "e-cigarette."

This is a research project, and your participation is voluntary. The focus group will last about an hour and a half. We will provide you \$40.00 after the focus group as a thank you for your participation. You may choose not to answer any question. You may leave at any time during the session.

Your participation is anonymous. Findings from the focus group will be the ideas that you all share with us today, not your names. Sometimes we will quote what the group says, but we will not use anyone's names in the findings. This study is interested in *what* is said, not in who says what. With this in mind, please respect the privacy of the other people in the group and do not share what is said today/tonight with others. On occasion, researchers from NIH and FDA may listen to this discussion today/tonight.

Do you have any questions so far? **[ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS]**

Are you willing to participate in this focus group?

[IF PERMISSION WAS GIVEN FOR INTERVIEW] Super. In addition, we need to audio record this focus group session. This helps _____ and me; I can listen better to what you are saying, and the recording will help _____ be sure that her notes are complete. We will destroy the audio recording and any identifying information when the project ends. Are you okay with us recording? I will call on you one by one for your answer. **[CALL ON GROUP MEMBERS]**

[IF PERMISSION WAS GIVEN TO RECORD] I'd like to start the audio recording now.

[TURN ON RECORDER]

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For the purposes of the recording I am going to repeat my requests to participate in the focus group and to allow us to record so I have your permission on tape. Are you willing to participate in this focus group? I will call on you one by one for your answer. **[CALL ON GROUP MEMBERS]**

Are you okay with us recording? I will call on you one by one for your answer. **[CALL ON GROUP MEMBERS]**

Just one last thing. I will call on you by your WebEx user name when appropriate. However, you don't have to wait for me to call on you. Feel free to speak naturally and interact with the other focus group participants. When studying the transcripts from today's session, it is helpful for me to know when we change speakers. So, please identify yourself by user name when you speak so that we have that on tape. Also, please try to speak one at a time and if you're talking to another person in the focus group, make sure to refer to them by their user name so that we know who you're talking to. If it looks like someone used their last name in their WebEx user name, please only refer to them by their first name. For example, if the user name is "John Smith," please just refer to him as "John S."

Does anyone have any other questions? **[ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS]**

2. INTRODUCTIONS

Let's start off by going around the room: state just your first name, say approximately how long you've been using e-cigarettes, and then tell us something unique about yourself – an interesting hobby, famous relative or ancestor, something like that.

3. E-CIGARETTE DEVICE

[GENERAL DISCUSSION – NO NEED TO ASK EVERYONE INDIVIDUALLY]

One thing we're interested in learning about is *why* people use the type of e-cigarette that they do. Anyone can start this discussion, but I'd like you to tell me what kind of e-cigarette you usually use and why you selected that one.

- a. What kind of e-cigarette do you usually use?
 - i. What do you like about it?
 - ii. How did you pick that brand/type? Is the e-cig you use now different than the one you used in the past?
 - i. [IF YES] Why do you think that has changed?
- b. How many e-cigarettes do you own?
 - i. Are they different kinds/brands?
- c. What kind of battery does your e-cig have?
- d. Have you done anything to your e-cig to change how it works or how it looks?
 - i. What did you do?
- e. Do you know anyone who has done something to their e-cig to change how it works or how it looks?
- f. What do you look for when you buy an e-cig?
 - i. Design? Product characteristics? Price?

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- g. Consider these three categories of e-cigs: non-rechargeable and disposable e-cigarette, rechargeable e-cigarette with replaceable cartridges, and rechargeable e-cigarette that is refillable with nicotine fluid. Can you easily put your e-cigarette in one of these categories?
 - i. Why or why not?
 - ii. Has this changed over time?
 - iii. Can you think of any e-cigs that wouldn't fit into these categories? Why do you say that?

4. E-CIGARETTE USE BEHAVIOR

We believe that, like regular cigarette smokers, e-cigarette users may have a pattern to how they use the e-cig throughout the day.

- a. How do you typically use your e-cig over the course of the day?
 - i. How often do you use your e-cig in a typical day?
 - ii. How soon after you wake up do you usually use your e-cig?
 - iii. Where do you tend to use your e-cig?
 - a. Why do you think that is?
 - iv. For how long have you been using e-cigs this way?

[ASK IF THE TERM “VAPE” COMES UP – otherwise ask at the end of this section]:

- a. Has anyone else ever heard of the word “vape” or “vaping” to describe using an e-cig? Or, do you tend to use the words “puff” or “drag”?
- b. Have you heard people use any other e-cig slang that we haven't mentioned yet today?

5. [DUAL USE GROUPS ONLY] DUAL USE

Everyone in this group indicated that you use both e-cigarettes as well as regular cigarettes. Some of you may typically use both products on the same day and some of you may alternate products over the course of week. Tell me if your use is daily or weekly, and then talk about when you use one of the other.

- a. Do any of you use other tobacco products and e-cigarettes in the same day?
 - i. Tell me a little more about that
- b. Do any of you use other tobacco products and e-cigarettes in the same week?
 - i. Tell me a little more about that

[PROBE AS NEEDED WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO PARTICIPANTS WHO DO NOT INDICATE DAILY DUAL USE]:

- c. At what times do you use e-cigs and when do you use _____ ?
- d. Why do you sometimes use e-cigs and sometimes use _____ ?
- e. Does your product use change by where you are, like at work or at home?
 - i. Why do you think that is?
- f. Does your product use change by who you are with, like friends or family?
 - a. Why do you think that is?
- g. Do these patterns stay the same month to month, or does how you use e-cigs and _____ vary a lot from month to month?

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b. Why is that do you think?

6. QUANTITY

- a. How much do you use your e-cigarette throughout a day or week?
 - i. How do you know that?
- b. How much nicotine solution do you typically use in a day?
 - i. How do you know that?/How can you tell?
- c. Do you have a typical nicotine liquid brand that you like to use?
 - i. What do you like about it?
- d. How often do you switch nicotine liquid brands?
 - i. Why do you do that?

[ASK IF THE TERM “E-JUICE” COMES UP, otherwise ask at the end of the section]:

- e. Have you heard of the term “e-juice”?
- f. What are other words for the nicotine solution that goes in e-cigs?

In our surveys, we often want to learn how many cigarettes smokers are using. We thus typically ask a question like the following **[SHOW TO PARTICIPANTS]:**

“On average, about how many cigarettes do you now smoke each day? A pack usually has 20 cigarettes in it.”

- g. If we were to ask about e-cigarette use, does asking **[SHOW]:**

“On average, about how many times do you usually use an e-cigarette each day?” make sense to you? Explain.

- h. **[IF THE ABOVE WORKS]** How meaningful would it be for us to then ask **[SHOW]:**

“Each time you use one, how many [FILL w/ “inhaler,” “vapes”] do you take?”

- i. **[IF QUEX DO NOT WORK]** What would be a better way to ask the question?

Let’s take a look at an alternate question. Does this make sense to you? Why/not?

“How many days do you use an e-cigarette before you have to replace it with a new one or put in a new or refilled cartridge?”

- j. It’s also informative for researchers to understand how strong the product is that people are using? **[OPEN DISCUSSION – NO NEED TO GO PERSON BY PERSON]** What strength of e-cig/nicotine concentration do you usually use?
- i. **[ASK IF DOESN’T COME UP]** Do you think about the strength of your e-cigarettes in descriptive terms, such as “light,” “regular,” “bold,” etc.?
 - ii. **[ASK IF DOESN’T COME UP]** Do you think about the strength of your e-cigarettes in terms of nicotine concentration, such as the percentage of or number of milligrams of nicotine in the product?

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- iii. Have you ever switched nicotine liquid strengths?
 - a. Why did you do that?
 - b. How often do you switch?

7. NICOTINE SOLUTION

- a. Let's talk about nicotine liquid flavors. What flavors have you used?
- b. Do you have a typical nicotine fluid flavor that you like to use?
 - i. What is it? How did you choose it?
- c. What other flavors have you used?
- d. What made you choose the flavors you've used?
- e. How often do you switch flavors?
- f. Do you think this list covers all the flavors that you've used? How would you change it? **[POST LIST ON SCREEN]:** menthol, mint, clove, spice, candy, fruit, chocolate, alcohol (such as wine or cognac), or other sweets.
- k. What do you know about people making their own nicotine solution?
 - i. Have you ever made your own nicotine solution?
 - a. Tell me more/Why did you do this?

8. MODIFICATIONS

- a. What have you heard about people changing how their e-cigs work?
- b. Have you done anything to change how your e-cig works?
 - i. Why did you do this?
- c. Do you know anyone who has done something to change how their e-cig works?
 - i. Why do people make these changes to their e-cigs?
- d. **[If DRIPPING DOES NOT COME UP NATURALLY]** Has anyone ever heard of "dripping" with your e-cig?
 - i. What is it?
 - ii. Does anyone do it?
 - iii. Why do you think people drip?
- e. What else can people use in e-cigs?

9. E-CIG PURCHASING

- a. Where did you buy your current e-cig?
 - i. How often do you purchase e-cigs or e-cig components?
- b. Where do you usually buy nicotine solution [e-juice] for your e-cig?
 - i. How often do you purchase nicotine solution [e-juice]?

CLOSE

Those are all the questions I have for you, but let me check with my colleagues to see if there are issues you all raised about which they have additional questions.

[CHECK WITH OBSERVERS, RETURN AND ASK ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS, AS APPROPRIATE]

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Thank you for your thoughts and your time today. We will send you \$40 as a thank you for your participation via FedEx. Do you have any other questions?