Appendix A: Protocols for focus groups and telephone and in-person interviews[1]

Program Staff Protocol

DRAFT Facilitation Guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this <focus group or interview>. Your insights are a really important part of the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) project. The goal of the project is to explore ways that we can apply principles of the behavioral sciences —that uses psychology and economics-- to improve your jobs and help better serve families. Insights from these fields have successfully been used to help people increase their savings rate or reduce their energy use, and we hope to identify areas in human services programs where they can be applied as well. We want to talk about how this program works, and any ideas you have that might help you do your job better or improve the experience of the program for families. Please read through and sign the consent form and we can get started. The conversation will be audio-recorded, but you will have the opportunity to tell us if you do not want any comments repeated. You are also welcome to share any comments to any one of us privately. *As is stated in the consent form that I'll be handing out, participation is voluntary and the focus group should take about an hour of your time.* According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this collection is 0970-0356 and the expiration date is 01/31/2015.

Please go around and quickly introduce yourself.
> What is your current position?
> Please briefly describe your key responsibilities.
> How long have your worked in this program?
> Have you held previous positions at this or other human services programs?

Finding out about and enrolling in Services

Let's talk about how families find out about [PROGRAM] and the steps they need to take to receive services.
> How do eligible clients learn about the availability of services? Is it referrals, community advertising, or through another program?
> What types of steps are in place to screen applicants for eligibility?
> What determines eligibility?

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[1] *Note: There are three protocols in Appendix A: (1) ACF Program Staff, (2) ACF Program Administrators and (3) ACF Program Clients/Families. The appropriate protocol will be used for focus groups and telephone and in-person interviews.*

What are some tools during the screening and eligibility determination process, for example, paper forms, internet based, what types of verification, is documentation needed, what examples of documentation (tax forms, SSN, birth certificate)?
How long does it take to determine eligibility?
 What is the first point of contact? Is it online, at an office nearby or here, do they have to make an appointment, call a phone number?
Are there any points in the process that rely on a universal intake? Or is there a point that screening or eligibility is tailored to the circumstances of the family?

Service Receipt and Maintenance

Now we'd like to talk about clients' experiences while receiving services.
How long does it take to receive services once eligibility is determined?
What is an orientation like? Are there written materials? Is this done one on one with a case manager? In a group format?
Does this process vary a lot depending on the client? In what way?
Is the family assigned a case worker, a counselor, a point of contact?

What are the key services that people receive? How are these services delivered? Case management, support services, referrals to other services, direct assistance such as counseling?
Are any services individualized? Can you describe this? Where are these services located? Are they centralized in location or do families have to go elsewhere?
Do people take advantage of most of these services? If not, why not?
Is there recertification, or when does eligibility have to be re-determined?
Are there strategies for retaining eligible individuals like reminders?

Probe: How are people's walkthrough's similar/dissimilar? Does it appear to be the same at the caseworker/administrator level? Are there any steps that might be missing?

Data Processes

Is there a data system that tracks eligible clients and their progress through screening and receipt of services?
Is there a data system for tracking contact and visits?
Describe the data systems. Who puts in the information? How frequently? Is it checked by another person? Who has access to the data?
What metrics do you use to monitor clients' progress?

Probe: Discuss any broad themes or specific examples that have arisen that are especially relevant to BIAS. Can they be discussed in behavioral terms like social norms, channel factors, construal, foot-in-the-door effects, plan-making, or choice overload? How might they lead to implementation studies?

Conclusion

> Do you have a story that you consider a particular success or failure of a client navigating the process?
> What would you do to improve take-up or access to [PROGRAM]?

Thank you again for your participation. If there is anything you've said in the course of the focus group that you do not want to be anonymously quoted to ACF or in our final report, please let us know so we can mark it as private. We will also be available if you have any comments you would like to make to us privately. Have a good day.