

# **Veterans' Community Reintegration Focus Groups Facilitator's Guide**

## **Verbal Consent to Participate in Focus Group**

Below is the script to be read verbatim, as indicated by the special font, to participants in the focus group. The script obtains individuals' verbal consent to participate in the focus group activity.

### **Introduction**

#### **All participants:**

You are being invited to take part in a focus group conducted by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA). The Deputy Director, Transition to Veterans Program Office, has asked CNA to conduct this focus group to obtain feedback from you on how you reintegrated into your communities after completing active duty, and to identify any challenges that you may have faced. We will provide the Deputy Director with a summary of our discussion today that she can use to inform decisions regarding refinements to the Transition Assistance Program.

Your decision to take part in this discussion is completely voluntary. You may refuse to take part, or choose to stop your participation, at any time. A decision to refuse to take part or to stop being a part of this focus group will not have a negative effect on you in any way. There is also no direct benefit from being in this study; however, taking part will inform future transition programs and policy decisions.

All information discussed today will be both anonymous and held in confidence by CNA. We will be recording today's discussions solely for the purpose of later transcribing your inputs. We will summarize and report the information you provide with the responses of others. We will not link responses to any single individual. To serve as a reference in writing our summary document, we will take notes during today's discussion. The notes will not include personally identifying information about the group's participants.

We will not be collecting or associating your name or any other identifiable information with the discussion we have today. The information provided will not become part of your military record and will not affect your career or your future benefits in any way.

We also ask that you not share the specifics of what is said in this group with others, so as to maintain the confidentiality of the process. The focus group will last two hours.

At the end of our discussion, we will distribute an “intake form,” collecting information on you demographic and service-related characteristics. This form should take no more than ten minutes to complete. Your completion of the intake form is also completely voluntary. These forms will collect no personally identifiable information. We will leave the room while you complete these forms, and will have no way of matching your responses to your characteristics. We are collecting this information only to be able to characterize the overall demographic and service-related characteristics of our focus groups.

Are there any questions about your participation in this discussion session?

**If yes, the group facilitator will answer all questions until the members are fully informed.**

Are there any other questions?

**If there are no questions, or the all questions have been answered, the facilitator will give the participants an opportunity to refuse to participate:**

If you do not want to participate in this study, please take this time to gather your things and leave the room.

**By remaining, individuals are verbally agreeing to participate in the focus group. The facilitator should turn on the recorder at this point.**

## **Discussion Topics and Question Guide**

Below are the discussion topics for the focus groups. Each topic is followed by a list of questions.

### **Organizations and social structures (25 minutes)**

1. Are you involved in community groups including church groups, volunteer organizations, political groups, or sports activities? If so, which ones and, on a weekly basis, how often do you participate?

2. Are you involved in veterans' groups? If so, which ones and, on a weekly basis, how often do you participate?
3. How often do you socialize with friends or people outside your household? Are the majority of your social activities structured events, like the community groups we talked about previously, or informal socializing?
4. Do you use social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn) to connect with people within your local community? Do you use these tools to stay connected with people outside of your local community?
5. At the time of separation, how did your relationship status and household composition influence your activity within your community?

### **Community location decision (15 minutes)**

1. How long have you lived in your current community? Is this the same community as you lived in directly after separating? If not, how many times have you moved since separation and the reasons for moving?
2. What were the main reasons for choosing to locate where you did after separation from service? How did your relationship status and household composition affect your location decision?

### **Initial intentions after separation (20 minutes)**

1. What were/are your initial post-service job/educational plans? Did you have a specific job or school lined up or a general plan?
2. Did those plans work out within the first 4-6 months? Within 6-12 months? Within 12-24 months? If not, why not?
3. How did you adjust your post-service plans after separation? Were there any unexpected transition challenges that forced you to change your plans?
4. Other than TAP, did you use any other transition or employment services, including those online? If not, why not? If yes, which services did you use, were they helpful, and how could they be improved? Did you use any services from a state employment office (One Stop Career Centers)? Did you find those services helpful?

### **Reintegration challenges (25 minutes)**

1. Are there any major obstacles (such as work or family responsibilities) preventing you from being more involved with your community? From feeling more integrated?
2. Does community support differ for those with or without families?
3. How do you feel your length of service affected your community reintegration? How about the amount of time deployed vs. not deployed? Which had a more lasting effect on your reintegration?

4. How much time was there between your last deployment and separation? How did this affect your ability to reintegrate into the community?

### **Transition Assistance Program effect on reintegration (25 minutes)**

1. Had you already decided where you would live after separation before going through TAP?
2. Did TAP provide any information on how to become more involved with your community or the benefits of community involvement?
3. Besides providing employment guidance, were there other ways TAP was beneficial to your reintegration?
4. Is there any particular guidance or insights you *wish* you had received from TAP, but did not?

### **Community involvement effect (10 minutes)**

1. Have your social interactions and community involvement increased your employment opportunities?
2. Does participating in your community decrease your overall stress levels?

FACILITATORS: At the end of the discussion, please leave 10 minutes for the participants to complete in Intake Form. At ten minutes prior to ending, distribute the Intake Form, instruct the participants to insert their form into a large envelope at the front of the room upon completion, and exit the room until all participants have completed their survey and left. The intake forms should be kept on your person at all times (in carry-on luggage if air travel is included). Once back at CNA, keep these forms locked in your safe. When you are able to, enter the data directly from those forms onto an excel spreadsheet on the Scientific Computing Operations (SCO) server. Do *not* make data entries directly onto your CNA laptops. Save the spreadsheet to the server, and shred the files after data entry has been completed.