

Pilot for Estimate of Housing Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay and Transgender People: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Introduction and Consent

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

- **Who are we?** I'm [name], a researcher with the Urban Institute; I will be your moderator for the session. The Urban Institute is a non-profit research organization located in Washington, DC. With me today is [name and affiliation].
- **Why am I here?** You have been invited to join this group because you have looked for a rental apartment or house at some time in the past few years [and because you are [lesbian, gay, transgender female, transgender male]]. The Institute, on behalf of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is studying the experiences people have when they search for housing to understand the extent of housing discrimination in the US. We will be speaking with you to better understand key aspects of the housing search process. We will be holding four other focus groups to discuss the same topics with a range of people in the community.
- **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 housing search practices. 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?** Importantly, we ask everyone here today to respect people's privacy. Although we cannot control what people say after they leave, we remind you that what is said in the room should stay in the room. We will use only first names in today's discussion; we will not identify you even by first name in our records of the session. We will use what we learn today and from other discussion groups to inform the design of a study of housing search practices and experiences in the US. The report resulting from this larger study will be submitted to HUD to inform the federal government about challenges face by people looking for housing.
- **How does this work?** The session today should last about 1.5 hours. At the end of this session, we will ask you to complete a short, anonymous background information form. We will also give you \$20 for participating 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.

Confidentiality Statement *[Moderator 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 participating. The group discussion will last about 1.5 hours.

The information you provide will be confidential, and will not be shared 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 HUD. 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 study has signed a legal document stating they will not reveal any of your personal information and can be severely penalized if they do.

We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we capture all of it. So, with your permission, [name of person] will be taking notes on a laptop computer. The notes will not include your name. Does anyone have an objection or concern about the notetaking? 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.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

To get started, please tell us your first name and when you last searched for rental housing.

A. Housing Search Practices

1. Where do people find information on houses and apartments available for rent? (websites, newspaper, friends or family, rental signs in neighborhoods, etc.)
2. When you have looked for apartments or houses for rent in the last few years, how did you go about finding information on available apartments and houses?
3. Have you lived in other cities where you used different approaches to search for housing?
4. Are there information sources or housing search approaches you know about but would not use? If so, why?
5. When you have searched for rental housing, did you look for units in a number of neighborhoods or did you limit your search? Why?
(Probe on factors that affected breadth of search: safety, familiarity, expected treatment, etc.)

B. Self-Identification

1. When looking for a rental unit, do you identify your [sexual orientation / gender identity] to a housing provider?
2. Are there situations in which you would choose to identify or not identify your [sexual orientation / gender identity] to a housing provider?
 - a. Describe the situations and the reasons for identifying or not identifying.
3. If you were to identify yourself, at what point in the process would you do so? (initial telephone call or email, upon meeting in-person, at end of interaction, etc.)
4. How have you or would you identify your [sexual orientation / gender identity]?
(Probe for specifics: what would people say to a housing provider.)

C. Safety Risks and Mitigation

1. Have you or any acquaintances experienced an unsafe situation during a search for rental housing? Describe.

2. What (other) safety risks do you think might be likely?
3. What steps or actions do you take, if any, to feel safe when looking for housing to rent?
 - a. Are there practices that would increase people's safety when searching for rental housing?
 - b. Are there resources or supports that would be helpful for dealing with a safety problem after it occurred? (counseling support, hotline, etc.)
4. Have you ever been treated by a housing provider in a way that seemed discriminatory? Describe.
5. Are there resources or supports that would be helpful for dealing with a discriminatory experience? Describe.

D. Wrap-up

1. Do you have additional comments about the issues we've covered?
2. Are there concerns that I haven't asked about?

Thank you

Ask participants to complete the background questionnaire and sign a stipend receipt form.