

ATTACHMENT C3: COST STUDY FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Case Worker and Supervisor Focus Group Guide¹

Focus Group Meeting

Introduction (10 minutes)

Lead Facilitator's Scripted Comments: We would like to start off today's discussion by thanking you for agreeing to share your experiences conducting case work and supervision activities under **[name of PII Site project]**. My name is **[Focus Group Lead Facilitator]** and with me is my colleague **[Focus Group Facilitator #2]**. We both work for James Bell Associates, a research firm located in Arlington, Virginia, which is near Washington, DC.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is a Federal agency that funded **[name of PII Site project]**. We are studying the cost of operating the **[name of PII Site project]** and four other projects like **[name of PII Site project]** across the country so that child welfare agencies in other jurisdictions will be informed about resource requirements as they consider possibly implementing the **[name of PII Site project]** in their jurisdictions. The information you give us also will be used to help make improvements to the **[name of PII Site project]** and future programs like this one and to inform the Federal government and other jurisdictions regarding the cost of operating an intervention to reduce long-term foster care.

Each of you was selected to be here today because you understand through practical experience the common names and definitions of case work and supervision activities involved in serving and supporting children and families under the **[name of PII Site project]**. You also understand from direct experience how much of your time is needed to carry out case work and supervision activities under the **[name of PII Site project]**.

Let me briefly mention some of the procedures for our discussion. Throughout most of the meeting you will work in two small groups comprised of case workers and supervisors. The discussion will last approximately 4 hours including breaks and will adjourn at **[Insert time]**. The meeting time will be divided into four exercises: three devoted to **[name of PII Site project]** case work and supervision activities and one focused on the structure, content and procedures for completing the Weekly Case Work Activity Log and the Weekly Supervision Activity Log. The discussion will be audiotaped.

[First Name of Focus Group Facilitator #2] and I **[Focus Group Lead Facilitator]** will ask you questions and to share your thoughts and opinions. Remember, we are here to learn and gather information from you, the experts on **[name of PII Site project]** case work and supervision. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions we will be asking. Please share your point of view even if it is different from what others have said. We expect that you might have different points of view. You are encouraged to add something to what someone has said or you may want to agree, disagree, or add an example. We

¹ Krueger, R. A. & Casey, M.A. (2000) *Focus Group: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

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are here to ask questions, listen to your insights, and make sure everyone has an opportunity to share knowledge gained through actual experiences. Sometimes you may notice we are shifting the conversation so that other people have a chance to talk or closing the discussion on a particular topic so we can be sure to cover all the topics on today's agenda. While we are talking, please feel free to ask a question at any time, stand up, or get more refreshments. **[Focus Group Facilitator #2]** and I **[Focus Group Lead Facilitator]** will be recording key points on worksheets and easels and taking notes to help us remember what you said. No names will be included in any of the reports. Anything you say during your involvement in the focus group will be kept private and will not be shared with other agency personnel involved in the **[name of PII Site project]**. We also ask you not to discuss what anyone else says outside of this room. If you agree, you will be acknowledged as a "key contributor" in reports and publications on the PII Cost Evaluation.

Let's begin by having each person in the room tell us his/her name, position title, and how long he/she has been involved with the **[name of PII Site project]**.

Exercise A: Names and Definitions of [name of PII Site project] Case Work and Supervision Activities (60 minutes)

Step 1: Lead Facilitator Reviews Exercise Aim - Gain agreement on standard names and definitions of **[name of PII Site project]** case work and supervision activities.

Step 2: Case workers and supervisors form separate breakout groups. Lead Facilitator reviews and leads a brief discussion of the case worker breakout group on the general definitions of "direct client service case work" (case work activities that directly involves children and families, such as conducting a meeting with a parent or observing a visitation between parent and child) and "indirect client service case work" (case work activities conducted on behalf of a client's child and family, such as case management documentation/MIS data entry, locating resources, advocating without the client, and case worker travel). Facilitator #2 reviews and leads a brief discussion of the supervisor breakout group on the general definitions of "individual supervision activities" (supervisory activities conducted with an individual case worker, such as case status review meetings, coaching sessions, and individualized training) and "group supervision activities" (supervisory activities conducted with multiple case workers, such as conducting team meetings).

Step 3: Working in separate breakout groups of case workers and supervisors, complete Worksheet A, Names and Definitions of Direct and Indirect Client Service Case work Activities, or Worksheet B, Names and Definitions of Individual and Group Supervision Activities. The columns of Worksheets A and B contain a preliminary listing of the names and short definitions of case work and supervision activities, respectively. These names and short definitions will be developed by the PII Cost Evaluation Team and will have been reviewed and commented upon by participants before the focus group meeting. The Facilitator for each breakout group will ask participants to consider the following for each listed case work or supervision activity:

- a) Does the activity account for more than 10 percent of case work or supervision time in a typical week? [Yes, Not Sure, No] Activities with a "no" response will be eliminated from further consideration during the focus group meeting.
- b) Is the activity name accurate and likely to be understood by other case workers or supervisors that work on **[name of PII Site project]**? [Yes, Not Sure, No] For

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activities with a “no” or “not sure” response, the Facilitator will lead a discussion on a workable solution: re-name the activity, combine the activity with another activity, eliminate the activity, or temporarily “park” the activity without resolution.

- c) Is the activity definition accurate and likely to be understood by other case workers or supervisors that work on [name of PII Site project]? [Yes, Not Sure, No] For activities with a “no” or “not sure” response, the Facilitator will lead a discussion on a workable solution: eliminate the activity, re-define the activity, combine the activity with another activity, eliminate the activity, or temporarily “park” the activity without resolution.

Step 4: Focus group participants conduct a final all-group review of Worksheets A and B.

Break (15 minutes)

Exercise B: Estimates of Amounts of Person-time Used to Conduct [name of PII Site project] Case work and Supervision Activities (60 minutes)

Step 1: Lead Facilitator Reviews Exercise Aim - Gain agreement on estimates of typical amounts of person-time expended conducting the [name of PII Site project] case work and supervision activities identified in Exercise A.

Step 2: Lead Facilitator will lead all-group discussion on challenges in estimating amounts of time and the intended form of agreed-upon estimates (10-minute increments). Challenges include differences in time required across separate instances of the same activity and differences among case workers or supervisors in time required for the same activity. The facilitators will emphasize the importance of reaching a working consensus on time estimates and that high, medium, and low time estimates are acceptable for the same activity. A breakout group can decide that they are unable to agree on the estimated time required for given activity.

Step 3: Working in separate breakout groups, case workers and supervisors complete Worksheet C, Estimated Time to Complete Direct and Indirect Client Service Case work Activities, or Worksheet D, Estimated Time to Complete Individual and Group Supervision Activities. The columns of Worksheets C and D will contain the name of each activity and a preliminary estimate of the time required to conduct that activity. The preliminary time estimates will be informed by prior examination of administrative data and the reviews of preliminary estimates by focus group participants before the meeting.

The facilitator for each breakout group will asked participants to consider the following questions for each listed case work or supervision activity:

- a) Does the activity as named and defined in Exercise A account for more than 10 percent of case work or supervision time in a typical week? [Yes, Not Sure, No] Activities with a “no” response will be eliminated from further consideration during the focus group meeting.
- b) Is the preliminary estimate of required person-time for each case work or supervision activity reasonably accurate and agreed-upon by the breakout group (and in the breakout group’s opinion likely to be generally agreed-upon by other case workers or supervisors that work on [name of PII Site project])?

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[Yes, Not Sure, No] The breakout group facilitator will lead a discussion on a workable solution for activities with “no” or “not sure” response.

Step 4: Focus group participants conduct a final all-group review of Worksheets C and D.

Break (15 minutes)

Exercise C: Names, Definitions, and Person-time Estimates for [name of PII Site project] Management and Administration Activities (40 minutes)

Step 1: Lead Facilitator Reviews Exercise Aim - Gain agreement on standard names, definitions, and person-time requirements for [name of PII Site project] service delivery management and program administration activities.

Step 2: Facilitators review and lead a brief discussion by the focus group on the general definitions of [name of PII Site project] “service delivery management activities” (activities that support the delivery of client services, such as working on issues with other [name of PII Site project] staff members, attending training, and attending team meetings) and “program administration activities” (activities that foster [name of PII Site project] intervention development, implementation, and maintenance, such as attending grantee organization meetings, serving on committees or work groups, screening candidate referral agencies, outreach and marketing, and grants management).

Step 3: Working in separate breakout groups of case workers and supervisors, complete Worksheet E, Names, Definitions and Time Estimates for Service Delivery Management Activities, and Worksheet F, Names, Definitions and Time Estimates for Program Administration Activities. The columns of Worksheets E and F contain a preliminary listing of the names, short definitions and person-time requirements for service delivery management, and program administration activities, respectively. These names, short definitions, and person-time requirements will be developed by the PII Cost Evaluation Team and will have been reviewed and commented upon by participants before the focus group meeting. The facilitators asked participants to consider the following for each listed service delivery management and program administration activity:

- c) Does the activity account for more than 10 percent of the time spent on service delivery management or 10 percent of the time spent on program administration activity time in a typical week? [Yes, Not Sure, No] Activities with a “no” response will be eliminated from further consideration during the focus group meeting.
- d) Is the activity name accurate and likely to be understood by other case workers or supervisors that work on [name of PII Site project]? [Yes, Not Sure, No] For activities with a “no” or “not sure” response, the facilitator will lead a discussion on a workable solution: re-name the activity, combine the activity with another activity, eliminate the activity, or temporarily “park” the activity without resolution.
- e) Is the activity definition accurate and likely to be understood by other case workers or supervisors that work on [name of PII Site project]? [Yes, Not Sure,

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No] For activities with a “no” or “not sure” response, the facilitator will lead a discussion on a workable solution: re-define the activity, combine the activity with another activity, eliminate the activity, or temporarily “park” the activity without resolution.

- f) Is the preliminary estimate of required person-time for each service delivery management or program administration activity reasonably accurate and agreed-upon by the breakout group (and in the breakout group’s opinion likely to be generally agreed-upon by other case workers or supervisors that work on **[name of PII Site project]]**)? [Yes, Not Sure, No] The breakout group facilitator will lead a discussion on a workable solution for activities with “no” or “not sure” response.

Step 4: Focus group participants conduct a final all-group review of Worksheets E and F.

Exercise D: Review and Discussion of Weekly Case work and Supervision Logs (40 minutes)

Step 1:Lead Facilitator Reviews Exercise Aim - Gain agreement on the planned structure, content, and procedures for administering weekly case work and supervision activity logs (Web-based surveys) and the role of focus group participants in a limited trial administration of the weekly case work and supervision activity logs.

Step 2: Using a mock-up of the log entry screens, facilitators will lead a presentation and discussion of log content and administration procedures. Focus group participants will be asked to comment on the structure of the logs and issues in the feasibility of log completion by case workers or supervisors that work on **[name of PII Site project]**. Issues raised by focus group participants will be noted and possible resolutions will be discussed.

Step 3:Lead Facilitators lead a presentation and discussion of the role of focus group participants in a limited trial administration of the weekly case work and supervision activity logs, including the date on which they will receive an email prompt, procedures for opening the secure link to the Web-based surveys, and instructions for completing the log. In addition, focus group participants will receive questions about using the logs (quality of instructions, ease of use, relevance and clarity of questions, etc.) that will be discussed in a telephone conference that will occur within seven days after the focus group participants have submitted completed logs.