

**ATTACHMENT D**  
**FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS**

## YOUTH FOCUS GROUP CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

The Social Security Administration is sponsoring a study of the [PROMISE/ASPIRE] program to learn how it is working and how it can be improved. The study is being conducted by a team of researchers at Mathematica Policy Research and BCT Partners. Thank you for your interest in this very important study. By signing this form, you are agreeing to take part in the study. As a participant in this study, the following will happen:

- 1) You will complete a short form to provide a description of your background.
- 2) You will participate in a group discussion with researchers and other Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients to talk about your experiences with [PROMISE/ASPIRE] and the services you have received.

The decision to participate in the study is up to you. All information that is collected about you through today's discussion or agency records will be kept private to the extent allowed by federal law. The information we collect will be used for research purposes only. Your name will never be used in any reports and no information will be reported in any way that can identify you. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions on the background information form or during the group discussion.

***I have read this form (or it has been read to me). I understand the information in these materials and voluntarily agree to participate. If I have any questions, I can call a member of the study team at the toll-free number 1-8xx-XXX-XXXX.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARTICIPANT'S NAME (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 90 minutes per respondent. Send comments concerning this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information to [agency and address]. According to the United States federal government Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The OMB control number for this information collection is 0960-XXXX. Expiration Date [date].

## YOUTH BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

*Before we begin the discussion group, please take a few moments to answer some questions about yourself. Your answers will help us learn more about you and your background, which we can use to better understand the comments and experiences you share with us today. We will not identify you or share your specific answers—we will only report your answers combined with everyone else's. Thank you!*

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What is your gender?    Male             Female
  
3. How old were you when you began receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?  
If you do not know, please write in "don't know." \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Please describe the disability for which you are receiving SSI:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Are you currently enrolled in school (please check all that apply)?:  
 Yes, enrolled in high school  
 Yes, enrolled in GED program  
 Yes, enrolled in vocational training program  
 No, not enrolled in school

Thanks again for completing this questionnaire!

# YOUTH FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

## Introduction

My name is [name] and I am from [Mathematica /BCT Partners]. We are doing a study on the [PROMISE/ASPIRE] program. My understanding is that you are signed up to be in [PROMISE/ASPIRE]. We are holding discussion groups with people in [PROMISE/ASPIRE] to learn more about their experiences with the program.

What we learn from you today will help [state] do a better job of helping youth who are receiving SSI with school and work.

As you have been told, at the end of today's discussion group, you will receive a \$30 gift card for talking with us today.

Your participation in this discussion group is voluntary. There is no risk to you for participating. Whether or not you participate in the discussion will have no effect on your SSI benefits. At any time before or during the discussion, you can choose to not participate. Also, you do not have to answer any question you don't feel comfortable answering.

Everything you say today will be kept private to the fullest extent allowed by law; however, we may need to tell someone if keeping that information private could harm you or someone else. Otherwise, the information will be shared only with our study team. Nothing you say will be linked to your name and our reports will not identify you in any way.

I also want to let you know that I am not an expert on SSI, so I cannot answer questions or give advice about your SSI benefits or your personal circumstances.

The discussion should last about 90 minutes. I hope you will share your experiences and opinions freely in our discussion. To respect the privacy of other people in the group, please don't talk about or share anything you hear today. In order to have a great conversation, please speak clearly and one at a time. It is okay to disagree with one another, but please do not argue.

I will be jotting down notes during our conversation. Also, with your permission, I will record the discussion to make certain I have accurately heard everything you said. The recording will only be available to the [Mathematica/BCT] study team and will be destroyed at the end of the study. Please raise your hand if I do not have your permission to record the conversation. *[Facilitator: do not record conversation if there is any objection.]*

Before we begin, I am going to check to make certain the recorder is working properly. *[Facilitator: hit the record button, say a few words, stop the recording, and play back what you've recorded to ensure that the equipment is not only functional, but that the volume is good.]*

Does anyone have any questions before we begin? Ok, if there are no more questions, let's get started. *[HIT THE RECORD BUTTON].*

I have hit the record button. Everyone in the room has agreed to being recorded and to participating in the discussion. We'll begin by doing introductions—we will go around the room. Please tell us your first name and how long you have been participating in the [PROMISE/ASPIRE] program.

## A. Enrolling in [PROMISE/ASPIRE]

Let's start by talking about how you first heard about [PROMISE/ASPIRE] and signed up.

1. How did you first learn about [PROMISE/ASPIRE]?
  - a. Did you receive a call or a letter about [PROMISE/ASPIRE]?
  - b. Who told you about the program?
  - c. Did you see information about the program somewhere, like on a flyer?
2. Why did you decide to sign up?
  - a. What about the program interested you?
  - b. What did you hope to get out of [PROMISE/ASPIRE]?
3. Did you have any concerns about the program, any worries that it might not be right for you? Please tell me about your concerns/worries.
4. Did you have to do anything to sign up for [PROMISE/ASPIRE] or did your parent/guardian sign you up for the program?
  - a. What did you have to do? Did you fill out paper work? Go to a meeting?
  - b. Was it easy to sign up for the program? Difficult (and why)?

## B. Case Management

1. I would like to hear about your experiences with your [PROMISE/ASPIRE] [case manager/program job title for case manager]. A [case manager/program job title for case manager] is the person who ... By a show of hands, how many of you have a [PROMISE/ASPIRE] [case manager/program job title for case manager]? *[Facilitator: state the number of hands raised so the number becomes part of the recording]* Tell us about your [PROMISE/ASPIRE] [case manager/program job title for case manager].
  - a. How often do you talk to each other? How do you typically talk to each other (e.g., telephone, in-person, texting)? Would you like to talk with him/her more, less, or is this about right?
  - b. What kinds of things do you talk about?  
  
*PROBE:* education and employment goals/service needs (i.e., assessment), individualized education program (IEP)/transition plan issues
2. How helpful has your [case manager/program job title for case manager] been?

- a. What has been most helpful? What has been least helpful?
- b. Is there anything you would change about your [case manager/program job title for case manager] or the services he/she provides? Are there additional things you would like your case manager to help you with that he/she is not doing?

### **C. Education Services**

Now, let's talk about [PROMISE/ASPIRE] activities related to school and education.

1. By a show of hands, how many of you are currently in school? *[Facilitator: state the number of hands raised so the number becomes part of the recording]*

- a. What are your education goals/plans?

*PROBES:* go back to school, get your GED, graduate from high school, go to college or a trade/vocational school

- b. How do you think [PROMISE/ASPIRE] can help you reach those goals?

2. Have you taken any classes in school to help you learn how to live on your own when you are done with school? What did you think of those classes? Were they helpful? Why or why not?

3. What services related to your education have you used through [PROMISE/ASPIRE]?

*PROBES:* vocational education/training classes, GED classes, peer support workshops, support at IEP meetings.

- a. For those who used these services, what services were most helpful to you? Why? What services were least helpful? Why?

- b. For those who have not used any education-related services, why not? What might have encouraged you or made it easier for you to use them (e.g., knowing about them, flexible hours, more accessible location, different types of services, shorter wait times)?

4. Are there education-related services you want but haven't gotten? What services? Why haven't you gotten them??

### **D. Employment and Employment Preparation/Support**

Now, let's talk about your work experiences and activities you have done in [PROMISE/ASPIRE] to help you get or keep a job.

1. By a show of hands, how many of you are currently working at a job? *[Facilitator: state the number of hands raised so the number becomes part of the recording]*

For those who are working:

- a. Tell us about your job. What do you do there? How long have you been working there? How many hours per week do you work there? Do you get paid? How much do you earn?
- b. How did you find this job? Did your [PROMISE/ASPIRE] case manager/program job title for case manager] help you? How?
- c. Do [PROMISE/ASPIRE] staff ever visit you at this job—like your [case manager/program job title for case manager] or a [job coach/program job title for job coach]? How often and what happens during those visits?
- d. Overall, what do you think about this job? What do you like best? What do you like least? What have you learned at this job?

For those who are not working:

- a. Have you ever had a job before?
- b. Did anyone from [PROMISE/ASPIRE] help you find that job? How?
- c. When did your last job end?
- d. Why did you stop working there?

The next questions are for everyone, whether you are working right now or not:

- a. What are your employment goals for the future?
  - b. What type of job would you like to have when you get older?
  - c. How do you think [PROMISE/ASPIRE] can help you reach those goals?
2. What things have you done through [PROMISE/ASPIRE] to help you find a job?

*PROBES:* job site tours, resume preparation, career counseling, mock interviewing, job search workshops

- a. For those who used these services, what services were most helpful to you? Why? What services were least helpful? Why?
- b. For those who haven't used these services, why not? What might have encouraged you or made it easier for you to use them (e.g., knowing about them, flexible hours, more accessible location, different types of services, shorter wait times)?

3. Are there work-related services you want but haven't gotten? What services? Why haven't you gotten them?

## E. Other Program Services

1. What other [PROMISE/ASPIRE] services or activities have you used?

*PROBES:* benefits counseling, money management workshops, life skills classes, work accommodations training and assistive technology support, peer support groups, adult mentors

- a. For those who used these services, what services were most helpful to you? Why? What services were least helpful? Why?
  - b. For those who didn't use these services, why not? What might have encouraged you or made it easier for you to use them (e.g., knowing about them, flexible hours, more accessible location, different types of services, shorter wait times)?
2. Are there services you want or need but haven't gotten? What services? Why haven't you gotten them?
  3. Have you done any [PROMISE/ASPIRE] activities together with your parents/guardians?
    - a. What activities?
    - b. Was it helpful to have your parents/guardians there? Why or why not?
  4. (*Facilitator: only ask questions specific to your state*)

*IN AR and MD ONLY:*

Has PROMISE helped you pay for anything you or your family has needed, like gas or other transportation costs or equipment to help you work? What kinds of things has PROMISE helped pay for?

*IN WI ONLY:*

By a show of hands, how many of you have received a tablet with a data plan from PROMISE? [*facilitator: state the number of hands raised so the number becomes part of the recording*] What have you used this for? Has it been helpful? Why or why not?

*IN WI ONLY:*

By a show of hands, how many of you have opened a savings account with help from PROMISE? [*facilitator: state the number of hands raised so the number becomes part of the recording*] Has it been easy or difficult to have a savings account? Why?



## **F. Wrap Up**

To finish up, I would like everyone to think about all of the things they have done in [PROMISE/ASPIRE] and tell me:

1. What has been your overall experience with [PROMISE/ASPIRE]?
  - a. What have you liked best? What have you liked least?
  - b. Would you recommend [PROMISE/ASPIRE] to others your age? Why or why not?
2. What comments or advice about [PROMISE/ASPIRE] would you give to the people who designed the program? Is there anything you think they should have done differently?

Those are all the questions I have. Thank you so much for participating in this important discussion. Please don't leave before I give you your gift card for your participation. I will be asking you to sign this form so that I have a record that you received a gift card. Thank you again.