

HEALTHY MARRIAGE/
RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD PROGRAM

INSTRUMENT DCS-3

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT FOCUS GROUP TOPIC GUIDE

The FaMLE Cross-Site Project research team will conduct focus groups with program participants at approximately 20 grantees to explore participants' perspectives on the programs. The topic guide will be used to guide these semi-structured group discussions. The information collected will be used to help ACF and programs learn which aspects of HMRF programs are of greatest interest and value to clients.

THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 90 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. 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 information requested in this survey will be used to document how programs receiving HMRF grant funding operate and describe participant outcomes. The data gathered will allow ACF to better monitor grantee progress and performance. In accordance with the requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended ([5 U.S.C. 552a](#)), ACF/OPRE established system of records titled: 09-80-0361 OPRE Research and Evaluation Project Records, HHS/ACF/OPRE. A Federal Register Notice ([80 FR 17893](#)) announced the system.

FAMLE CROSS-SITE PROJECT—IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

CLIENT FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

NOTE: This is a guide, not a script. The guide has been developed to apply to RF/HM programs, as described in the funding announcement. Moderators will need to tailor the questions to the specific programs and add probes to further explore the experiences recounted by group members.

INTRODUCTION

Moderator and co-facilitator introductions

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We are from Mathematica Policy Research, an independent research firm; and we are here to learn about your experiences with the *[RF/HM PROGRAM NAME]*. My name is *[NAME]* and my colleague is *[NAME]*. Before we begin, I want to let you know that 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 # for this collection is 0970-XXXX and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX.

Explanation of Project and Purpose of Group Discussion

We are interested in hearing about your experiences as part of a broader research study that is looking at how programs like *[RF/HM PROGRAM NAME]* are working. We are interviewing staff at this program and other organizations that work with the program, and talking with participants like yourselves to ask about your experiences with the program. This will help us find out what people think through group discussion. We are interested in learning about your ideas, feelings, and opinions. We also are interested in learning about how you came to be involved in this program; what program activities you have participated in; what you find helpful about this program; and what you think should be improved. We will use the information you share with us to write a summary of what we have learned about this program, which we will publish in a future report about this program and others like it, but we will not use any of your names in our final report, so please feel free to talk openly about your opinions.

Privacy and Taping

The information we collect will be summarized only for the project. Although we will be taping the session and taking notes, everything you say will be kept private. We will not use any names or associate anyone's name with a quote. We value the information you will share with us and want to make sure we capture it all.

Does anyone object to our taping the discussion?

Ground Rules for Discussion

Before we start, we want to provide guidance about how our time together will go:

- This will be an informal discussion.

- The discussion will last about 1 to 1 and 1/2 hours. There will be no formal breaks. If needed, please feel free to stretch or use the restroom.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we will ask. We are interested in learning each of your opinions. We very much appreciate your input.
- We would like only one person to talk at a time so the recorder can pick up everyone. But we hope that each of you will speak up, and tell us your thoughts and feelings.
- To keep us on schedule, I may change the subject or move ahead from time to time.
- Each person here today will receive \$25 to show our appreciation for your feedback.

A. Introductions

To get things started, I'm going to go around the room and ask each of you for your first name and how long you've been in the program. Then we will discuss your experiences in the [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME]. We would like everyone to participate in the discussion.

1. Please introduce yourself and share how long you have been participating in [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME].

B. Recruitment, Engagement, and Motivation for Program Enrollment

First, we'd like to talk about how you learned about [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME] and why you were interested in enrolling.

2. How did you first learn about [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME]?
3. What were your reasons for participating in [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME]? What convinced you [or your partner] to participate in the program?
4. Before you started attending program services, what did you expect to get out of [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME]?

C. Program Services Received and Retention

Now, let's turn to discussing how much you have participated. Not all of you have necessarily participated in the same activities at [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME]. Some of you may have attended many types of activities, while others may have only attended one or two activities. Nevertheless, we'd like to hear about your experiences.

5. As part of this program, what classes, groups, or activities have you attended?
(Probe: These might be group activities or individual meetings with someone in the staff, such as a case manager or employment specialist)
 - a. How quickly did you start attending activities after signing up for the program?
 - b. About how many times have you attended these activities?
 - c. How regularly have you attended program activities? Have you attended daily, weekly, more or less often? Or has this varied since you started with the program?

- d. Have you attended any activities with another family member, such as your partner or your child? If so, what did you attend and who did you attend with?
6. Think for a moment about the topics that were covered during the parenting or fatherhood activities you have attended.
 - a. Which parenting or fatherhood topics have been the most helpful to you, why?
 - b. Which parenting or fatherhood topics have been the least helpful, why?
7. Now, think for a moment about the topics that were covered during activities focused on relationships or communication that you have attended.
 - a. Which relationships or communication topics have been the most helpful to you, why?
 - b. Which relationships or communication topics have been the least helpful, why?
8. Okay, now let's think about any activities you attended that focused on helping you to prepare for work. This may include classes or individual meetings that focus on job skills, resume writing, practice interviews, and similar activities.
 - a. Please describe the activities. *Probe: this might include helping you search for a job, helping you find a job, or helping you deal with a problem that came up at your job.*
 - b. What was most helpful about the activities, why?
 - c. What was least helpful, why?
9. Besides individual meetings with program staff about employment, what other individual meetings or telephone discussions have you had with program staff?
 - a. What was the position of the person you met with? For example, do you know if this person was a case manager, a social worker, or a group facilitator?
 - b. About how often and where did these meetings (or calls) occur?
 - c. Describe what happened during these meetings or calls with program staff, including the issues discussed.
 - d. Do you feel that these meetings met your specific needs? Do you feel that your case manager understood your needs?
 - e. What was the most helpful about these individual-level meetings and calls? The least helpful?

D. Challenges with Program Services

Now, let's talk about any problems or concerns you may have faced when participating in the program so far.

10. What, if any, concerns or worries did you have about participating in [RF/HM PROGRAM] prior to attending the program?
11. While you've been attending the program, have you had concerns or worries about participating in [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME] activities? How did staff help you address these?

12. Have responsibilities or obligations outside of the program kept you from attending activities? How have you balanced program participation with these outside responsibilities?
13. Has the program ever provided you any gifts or awards for attending program activities? (For example, bus tokens, cab fare, movie tickets, gift cards.) How important were these to you as a reason to either attend or continue attending?
14. Do staff encourage you to participate in the program? If so, how, and which staff member(s) provide this encouragement?
15. What happens if you do not participate in an activity you have been invited to?
16. What has been most effective in helping you to participate? What has been least effective?
17. What else could the program do to help or encourage you to attend activities?

E. Satisfaction with Program Services

We will wrap-up today's discussion with a few questions about your overall experience with [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME].

18. Thinking about the overall program, how satisfied have you been with your experience in [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME]? What contributes to this level of satisfaction?
19. Thinking about all of the services you received through [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME], which services were most relevant to you and your goals? Which were least relevant to you and your goals?
20. Which, if any, aspects of [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME] do you think could be improved and how?
21. How likely would you be to recommend [RF/HM PROGRAM NAME] to other [FATHERS/COUPLES] in your community? Why?

That concludes our questions for today. Thank you again for taking time to answer our questions. Does anyone have a question or comment they'd like to share before we end?

[Distribute gift cards]