

**Supporting
Statement for OMB
Clearance Request**

**APPENDIX F: Focus
Group Guide for
Service Recipients**

**Understanding the
Intersection Between
TANF and Refugee
Cash Assistance
Services**

New Collection

August 2015

Submitted by:
Office of Planning,
Research & Evaluation
Administration for Children & Families
U.S. Department of Health
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Appendix F: Focus Group Guide for Service Recipients

Instructions for OMB Reviewer

This draft contains the following sections:

1. Consent form
2. Participant information form
3. Introductory script
 - Introductions of facilitators
 - Purpose of focus group
4. Focus group questions

DRAFT

Consent Form

Understanding the Intersection Between TANF and Refugee Cash Assistance Services

Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's discussion. Your participation is very important to this study. Abt Associates and MEF Associates are working with [insert local program name] and programs like this around the country that provide services to refugees for this study.

This discussion will last about 90 minutes. We will ask you about your experience accessing refugee services. During the discussion, please use only your first name.

Your participation is voluntary and involves no significant risks to you. Whether or not you participate, it will have no effect on benefits you receive from [insert local program name], or any other organizations. You can choose not to answer any of the questions. You may leave the focus group at any time.

We will take notes and audio record the focus group. Only members of the research team will hear the recording. The notes and recording will be destroyed at the end of this project. We will not share any information about you with anyone outside the research team, and we will ask all participants to not discuss or share anything they have heard after leaving the focus group. However, here is always a risk that other people in the group may reveal what was discussed in the focus group, or people outside the research team will see the information you provide. Your name will not appear in any reports from the study. However, we would like to be able to quote you using a fake name. If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research, you may contact the project director, Robin Koralek at Abt Associates at 301-347-5613 or the study's principal investigator, Mary Farrell at MEF Associates at 703-838-2723.

If you are not satisfied with the response of the research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Katie Speanburg at Abt Associates' Institutional Review Board at 617-520-2499.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Signing this consent form indicates that you understand and are willing to participate in this study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this signed and dated consent form.

Participant Name (please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Researcher obtaining this Authorization: _____

	I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my name.
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9. What is your highest degree or level of school completed before coming to the U.S.?

- None
- Primary (up to grade 8)
- Some secondary school (9 to 12 years of secondary school but did not graduate)
- High school/secondary school (graduated)
- Some college or university but no college degree
- College or university degree
- Advanced or professional degree after college (PhD, Masters, legal, medical)
- Another degree or certificate _____

10. What kind of work did you do before coming to the U.S.? _____

DRAFT

Introductory Script

Introduction of Facilitator:

Hello, my name is _____ and I'll be leading our discussion today. My role is to direct the content and flow of the discussion and to make sure that we cover the topics of interest.

Purpose of the Focus Group:

Thank you for being part of this discussion group. Today's discussion is part of a study sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. They are interested in learning more about how states provide services to newly arrived refugees like you, including financial support through programs such as: refugee cash assistance, known as [insert local program name], or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, known as TANF or [insert local program name], employment services, and other support services for refugees.

The Administration for Children and Families hired two outside groups to conduct this study, Abt Associates and MEF Associates, and they hired me to lead this discussion. [If study group member is in the room, introduce them.] During the next one and a half hours, I will ask you about the types of services you have received. The information you share today will help the Administration for Children and Families better understand how services are provided to refugees.

Disclosure:

We are being audio-taped and I am taking notes. The study team wants to use information gathered today and from similar conversations in other cities to write a report for the Administration for Children and Families that describes refugee experiences with program services. Please be assured that everything we discuss today will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. You will not be identified in this conversation, beyond your first name, and no information about you, including your first name, will appear in any notes shared with the government or any written report. I hope that you will feel comfortable speaking about your experiences. Of course, if there are any topics or questions that you do not want to answer, you can choose not to say anything.

This discussion will take about 90 minutes. Your participation is voluntary and not required to receive any services or benefits. As a token of appreciation for your time, you will receive a \$30 gift card.

Finally, I want to make sure everyone has filled out the paperwork. This includes a consent form that gives me permission to audiotape this session and participant information form. Please let me know if you need these forms.

Ground Rules:

Before we begin, let me go over a couple of focus group rules.

- *I want to keep the discussion informal and relaxed.*
- *I did not schedule a break. If you need to get up to use the restroom, stretch or get a drink, please do so as needed. The restrooms are located [xxx].*
- *Please only tell us your first name. This will help us keep your information private. Please also refer to each other only by first name.*
- *During the discussion please ask me if something is not clear.*
- *There are no right or wrong answers. You can say positive and negative comments about your experiences.*
- *It is okay to share your opinions or thoughts even if they are different from what others have said. As I said, there are no right or wrong answers or comments. We want everyone to participate, and the opinions and experiences of everyone in the room are important. We want to hear different perspectives.*
- *Please talk one at a time so that I can hear everything that is said.*
- *I want to hear from all of you. Some people talk more than others, and I'll be encouraging everyone to speak up.*
- *You do not have to answer any specific questions you do not want to answer. If at any point, you want to pause the recording while you make a specific comment, please ask me.*
- *The discussion today is private. Please do not discuss or share anything you heard after you leave the focus group.*
- *If you have a cell phone, please turn it off or put it on vibrate mode.*

Do you have any questions before we start?

Focus Group Questions

Warm Up/Introductions

Please introduce yourselves by telling us your first name, your country of origin, and how long you have been in the United States.

I. Initial Services

We know that when you first came here, you were given some services during the first 30 days to help you get settled, and get food, shelter, and other basic services.

1. What organization helped you with these initial services?
2. Did any other individuals or organizations help you in the first few days after you arrived? If so, who?

II. Cash Assistance

As I mentioned earlier, the study team is interested in your experiences with programs that provide monthly cash assistance, such as *[use local program names]*. I have a number of questions about these programs.

1. Did any of you receive monthly cash assistance from one of these programs for at least a short period of time?
 - a. How long did you receive cash assistance?
 - b. From what organization or agency did you get the cash assistance? Which program provided the cash assistance?
 - c. How did you get connected with that organization or agency?
 - d. Did you have any problems finding the organization or agency?
2. I would like you to talk about the application process. Where did you *apply* for cash assistance like *[use local program names]*—that is, where did you fill out an application?
 - a. What steps did you take to apply?
 - b. Were the application and the application process easy or difficult?
 - i. If difficult, in what ways was it difficult?
 - ii. Did the agency/organization that provides the cash assistance give you any help with these issues? In what ways? What materials or staff were available to help? Were they helpful?

- c. Did you have issues with language when going through the application process?
- i. If yes, what kinds of issues?
- i. Did the agency/organization that provides the cash assistance do anything to help you with language? What did they do? What materials or staff were available to help? Were they helpful?
- d. Did anyone else from outside the agency/organization help you with the application or the application process? (For example, family members or staff from another organization?) If so, how did they help?
- e. Based on your experience, is there anything you would suggest should be done differently to make the application process better for refugees?
3. What requirements did you have to meet to receive cash assistance?
- Probe in particular on:*
- *Requirements they needed to meet to first get on cash assistance*
 - *Requirements to stay on cash assistance, including:*
 - *Meetings with case workers or other mandatory meetings*
 - *Work participation requirements, including employment, subsidized employment, work experience or community work, job search, on-the-job training, English as a Second Language, and education and training.*
- a. Were the requirements easy to understand? If not, what was confusing?
- b. What steps did you take or are you taking to meet these requirements?
- c. Are there limits on how long any particular activities could be used to meet the requirements?
- d. Did anyone help you figure out how to meet these requirements? Did anyone from the organization/agency help you make a plan of what steps to take? If so, please explain.
- i. Did that organization/agency refer you somewhere else to get help? If so, please explain.
- e. Was it easy to meet these requirements? If not, what was difficult?

III. Services

1. Aside from cash assistance, what other services did you receive?

Probe in particular on employment assistance, education (including English as a Second Language courses), social adjustment/cultural orientation services, child care assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/SNAP or [insert local program name], or other food assistance, and healthcare.

2. Ask the following questions for each of the following types of services (if mentioned in response to the previous question)

- Employment assistance
 - English as a Second Language
 - Other adult education
 - Social supports
- a. Who provided the services?
 - b. Can you describe the services you received?
 - c. How did you find out about them?
 - d. Did anyone help you apply for them?

IV. Job Search

1. Now I want to talk about your experience looking for and finding a job in this country. How many of you have a job now, or have had a job since you arrived in this country?

- a. For those of you who are working or have worked:
 - i. How long did it take to find a job?
 - ii. Are you doing work similar to what you did in your country of origin?
 - iii. Is this a seasonal job?
 - iv. In a typical week, how many hours do you work?
 - For those of you working part time (less than 30 hours a week), why are you working part time rather than full time?

2. *[Asking the full group again]* Has it been easier or harder to look for a job than you thought it would be?

3. Now I want to ask you about any help you have received with your job search.

- a. Organizations/agencies
 - i. Did any organizations or agencies help you in looking for a job? What kind of help did they provide? How did you learn about these organizations?
 - ii. Did any organizations provide you with services to know how to apply for a job here, such as helping you with resumes, or knowing how to interview? What kind of services did they provide? How did you learn about these organizations?
 - iii. Did any organizations provide you with supports like clothes for job interviews, transportation to an interview, child care, etc.? What kinds of supports did they give you? How did you learn about these organizations?

b. Individuals

- i.** Aside from the people at organizations or agencies, did any individuals help you with your job search, such as families, friends, or other people you know? If so, who? Were they also refugees? What kind of help did they give you?

V. Other Services

- 1.** Other than those already discussed, have you received any services that have been particularly helpful to you, as a refugee, in settling in this country?
 - a.** What were they?
 - b.** What agencies or organizations provided them?
 - c.** How did you find out about these services?
- 2.** Are there any services you need/needed that you did not receive?
 - a.** What are/were they?

VI. Program Coordination and Integration

- 1.** How many of you received services from more than one organization?
 - a.** How many organizations gave you services?
 - b.** What types of organizations or agencies were these?
- 2.** What was it like working with more than one organization?
 - a.** Did you have to go to multiple locations separately to apply for their services?
 - b.** Did they give you different types of services, or did their services overlap at all?
 - c.** What things made it easy to work with more than one organization?
 - d.** What things were most challenging about working with more than one organization?
- 3.** Are there ways in which you wish different organizations and agencies had worked better together? Please explain.
- 4.** Did any organizations provide you more than one type of services? Please give an example.
 - a.** Did you have to apply separately to the different services, or were you able to apply for all services with a single application?
 - b.** Were there advantages about receiving more than one type of services from the same organization? Were there disadvantages?

VII. Supports and Barriers to Employment

- 1.** For those of you who are working, have any services or people helped you stay employed? Have any organizations continued to give you services while you have been working? What organizations? For how long?

2. *[Asking the full group again]* Is there anything that has made it difficult for you to get or keep a job? If so, please explain.

Probe on child care, language barriers, transportation, ability to get proper work documentation etc. Do not explicitly probe on mental or physical health issues but allow the discussion to continue if participants raise these types of issues.

3. What have you done to address these problems?

Probe on services, organizations, social networks.

VIII. Satisfaction

1. Thinking about your experience with cash assistance and employment assistance, how satisfied have you been overall with the services you have received?
2. Overall, how easy or hard would you say it has been to find and receive the services you needed?
3. Are there services you needed but did not receive? What additional assistance would have helped you find a job? Settle into this community?
4. Do you have any recommendations for the people who run programs so they can better help refugees?

IX. Conclusion

1. Before we end, is there anything else you could like to say that you wanted to say earlier, but didn't get to say?

Thank you very much for your time. We discussed a lot today. The information you shared will help the Administration for Children and Families and others who run refugee resettlement programs and related services improve their programs.