

**INSTRUMENT #1**

**SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS: UPDATES TO HEALTHY MARRIAGE AND  
RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION**

**TOPIC GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION  
WITH PARTICIPATING ADULT APPLICANTS**

## TOPIC GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH ADULT APPLICANTS

This guide provides a list of topics and questions that we will use for focus groups with adult applicants in each healthy relationship program. The list of topics is divided into seven subtopics listed below. We plan to allocate 90 minutes for each adult applicant focus group, but anticipate variation in focus group length, depending on the model and adults participating. No focus group will exceed 90 minutes, including the introduction, informed consent, and icebreaker.

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today. I'm [INTERVIEWER NAME] and this is my colleague [ASSISTANT NAME], and we're researchers from the Urban Institute, a non-profit social policy organization in Washington, DC.

As we may have mentioned, as part of this study, we are talking to applicants in selected Healthy Relationship programs. We hope to learn about your experiences with the Healthy Relationship program, your awareness and understanding of LGB or lesbian, gay, and bisexual orientation and same-sex couples, and how the program may or may not have addressed same-sex couples.

Our meeting today with you will last about 90 minutes. The structure will be rather open-ended, meaning we have a list of questions to cover but you can feel free to respond as much detail as you would like. There is no right or wrong answer for any questions that we ask today and there is no penalty for choosing to not respond to any questions within the focus group. Please be respectful of others answers, perspectives, identity, or curiosity around any subject that we discuss today.

We are providing you a token of appreciation in the form of \$40. If you choose to withdraw from the study during a focus group, you will still be offered the indicated token of appreciation.

Before I begin my questions, I'd like to give you a copy of a consent form that describes our study procedures and your rights as a participant. If you agree to the study procedures, I'll ask you to sign and date your copy.

[NOTES TO FACILITATORS: Give copy of consent form to participant. Continue as participant reads along.]

I'd like to point out a few details on the consent form:

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 number for this data collection are 0970-XXXX and it expires XX/XX/XXXX.

1. First, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question and may stop the interview at any time.

2. Everyone who works on this study has signed a Staff Confidentiality Pledge prohibiting disclosure of anything you say during the interview that would allow someone outside the research team, including government staff and officials, to identify you. The only exception is a researcher may be required by law to report suspicion of immediate harm to yourself, to children, or to others.
3. Your name and other identifying information, such as the program's name and specific location, will be removed from the data to protect your privacy.
4. If we quote anything you share with us, we will not use your name in our report.
5. We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we accurately capture all the details. With your permission, we will audio record the session and take typed notes. These files will not be shared with anyone outside the research team. Once the project is complete, all audio recordings will be destroyed. During the discussion, if you would like to stop the recording while you make a particular comment off the record, please let us know and we will do so.
6. The OMB number for this data collection are 0970-XXXX and it expires XX/XX/XXXX.

Do you have any questions about the study procedures?

Would you please sign a copy of our Informed Consent Form, and then may we begin our interview?

[Participant must sign and return one copy and may keep the second copy.]

[If anyone objects to the recording, the researcher who is not leading the interview will need to take thorough notes.]

This guide provides a list of topics and questions that we will use for focus groups with adult applicants in each healthy relationship program. The list of topics is divided into seven subtopics listed below. We plan to allocate 90 minutes for each adult applicant focus group, but anticipate variation in focus group length, depending on the model and adults participating. No focus group will exceed 90 minutes, including the introduction, informed consent, and icebreaker.

#### **I. Introduction (5 minutes)**

- Introduction of researchers and healthy relationship practitioner
- Purpose of Discussion
- Logistics
  - Recording
    - Purpose is to help remember what was said
    - No names used.
    - No one outside the research team to have access to recordings/transcripts
    - Opting out of recording

- o Privacy
  - Never use names in report; names never associated with answers
  - Combining answers in reports, using statements like, “About half the people disagreed with statement X.”
- Ground rules
  - o No right or wrong answers
  - o Do not need to answer any questions you do not wish to answer
  - o No penalties or consequences for not answering questions
  - o Be respectful of everyone’s opinions, even if they are different from your own
  - o Be respectful of everyone’s identity, expression, or curiosity around subjects
  - o Do not talk about your own sexual orientation or identity or your own family.

**II. Informed Consent (10 minutes; consent and assent forms will be drafted)**

- Study purpose
- Information about rights and risks

**III. Icebreaker (5 minutes)**

- First names (voluntary)
- What would you want for dinner on your birthday?

**IV. Recruitment and Enrollment (10 minutes)**

- How did you learn about the program?
- We know some people are required to attend [program]. Were any of you required?
  - o *Probe:* If you were required to apply to [program], how did you feel about participating?
- What do you hope to get out of this program?
  - o *Probe:* Are these skills/techniques [mention specific items the respondent stated] are skills that would be beneficial to different couples?
- Had you participated in similar programs before?
- What attracted you to [PROGRAM]?
  - o *Probe:* Why did you enroll in [PROGRAM]?
  - o
- Is there any additional information about the recruitment and enrollment process that you would like to share?

**V. Orientation and Identity (20 minutes)**

- Increasingly individuals are beginning to publically identify or recognize same-sex attraction and identify as gay, lesbian, and bisexual. Are you aware of what these terms mean?

- LGB people are everywhere, but sometimes they don't talk about being LGB in public. When they do start to talk about it in public it is sometimes called "coming out of the closet." Do you know anyone, directly or indirectly, that has "come out"? Tell me more.
- Similarly, same sex couples exist, but sometimes they don't let others know that they are a couple. Do same sex couples in your community let others know that they are a couple? Tell me more.
- Some people use the term "safe space" to mean a place where LGB people and same sex couples can "come out of the closet" without fear of negative repercussions. When you applied to this program were you made aware of whether this space was a "safe space" for LGB people and same sex couples?

*Probe:* How did you know that it was a "safe space"? What steps did the program take to make this a safe space? Has this facility taken active measures (i.e. signs, etc) to show support for LGB individuals or same sex couples?

- o Is there any additional information you'd like to share about the environment at [program]?

## VI. Material on LGB Relationships (15 minutes)

- Have you ever discussed LGB issues or same sex couples issues in a classroom or program setting?
  - o *Probe:* In what context? Did it talk about LGB individuals? Did it talk about same sex couples?
  - o *Probe:* Were there any comments or actions that showed individuals interested in discussing LGB issues, or being upset or disagreeing with including a discussion on LGB issues?
  - o *Probe:* Did LGB issues come up in any discussions during class (perhaps outside of the [PROGRAM] materials themselves)? Tell me more.
  - o *Probe:* How did your instructors talk about LGB people or same sex relationships? Do you have any specific examples?
  - o *Probe:* Is there any additional information you'd like to share about the information shared in the program?
- Would you be comfortable discussing LGB issues or same-sex couples issues in a classroom or program setting?
- How are same sex relationships similar to opposite sex relationships?
  - o *Probe:* What sorts of issues do you think that both same sex and opposite sex couples experience?
- How are same sex relationships different than opposite sex relationships?

0

0 *Probe:* What sorts of issues do you think same sex couples deal with that opposite sex couples do not? How about vice versa?

- If the program that you have applied to provided material about same sex relationships , what would you want to know about?
- Thinking about other people, how do you think others would feel about the program including information for and about same sex couples?

**VII. Closing/Thank you (5 minutes)**

- Is there anything else anyone would like to say about [NAME OF PROGRAM] before we wrap up?

**Thank you for your participation today!**