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## COMMUNITY SUPPORT EVALUATION: SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT EMPLOYMENT NEEDS FOCUS GROUP—EMPLOYER VERSION

### VERBAL SCRIPT

#### **Welcome and Introduction**

Good [morning/afternoon/evening]. My name is [insert first name] and I will be your moderator for this sessions. I work for ICF—a research firm in located in Atlanta, GA. We have been contracted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to moderate this discussion. You have been invited here because SAMHSA is interested in hearing your opinions about the specific employment needs of program participants, potential employers, and employment specialists working to link consumers with employment.

Thank all of you for agreeing to participate. Your comments and suggestions are very important. Our discussion will take about 90 minutes. Before we begin, I want to let you know that I am not an expert on [INSERT STATE NAME] supported employment. Rather, my role as the moderator is to:

- Get your perceptions, opinions, and suggestions about various topics.
- Help guide the flow of the conversation.
- Make sure that everyone has an equal chance to weigh in.
- Ensure questions about various aspects of the topics are covered.

#### **Ground Rules**

Before we begin, I'd like to review some ground rules for today's discussion.

- ICF is required to have approval from the Office of Management and Budget to conduct this focus group. The approval number for this project is XXXX-XXXX. Also, if you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to: Robin Davis, Project Director, ICF International, Telephone: (404)-592-2188, Email: robin.davis@icfi.com, 3 Corporate Square, NE, Suite 370, Atlanta, GA 30329. [Moderator: Post this bullet on white board for each session.]
- We are audiotaping this focus group. I ask that you speak loudly and clearly. If I think you are speaking too softly to be heard on the recording, I will ask you to speak up.
- Don't engage in side conversations—we need for everyone to hear what the others are saying and for everything that's said to be heard easily on the recording.
- We would like to hear from everyone in the group, but you don't have to answer every question. Sometimes I'll ask everyone for their input. At other times, I will just throw a topic open for general discussion.
- There are no right or wrong answers. We expect differences in how people see things and want to understand these differences.

- Feel free to disagree or question each other. The purpose of a group session is for us to learn things in group interchanges that we don't get out of one-on-one discussions. If someone says something you disagree with or see in a different way, please share with the group.
- Please be considerate when participants are sharing their different experiences, needs, or perspectives. The point of this activity is to understand the employment needs of consumers, employment specialists, and employers as well as understanding where there is strong agreement/consensus of these needs and where there is little agreement about these needs.
- Your participation is voluntary. Therefore, at any point in time you may leave the virtual focus group room.
- If you would like to share an opinion anonymously, you may send a private response to the moderator to read to the group. However, note that the moderator will not read private responses if doing so will interrupt the flow of the discussion or the group has moved beyond the topic.
- If you have another phone, please turn it off or set to vibrate.
- If you need to step away from your computer or phone during this meeting, please send a "chat" message to me when you leave and when you have returned. Please do not put this line on hold if your phone is programmed to play hold music.

### **Participant Introduction**

I'd like to start by having you all introduce yourselves. Please tell us your first name (or the name you would like to use for this focus group and how long you've been there in your current role. Then, assuming you're at your desk and have your webcam working, show something on your desk or in your office that reveals something about yourself, like a hobby or favorite vacation spot.

**To begin, moderator reads [or shares] a brief description of the state's SAMHSA-funded SE project, including the target population and program goals.**

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**During the course of our discussion, we will spend time talking about the employment needs of your companies, as well as your experiences with the [NAME OF STATE PROJECT], such as being recruited to participate, receiving training or other supports, interacting with employment specialists (or job coaches), and hiring SE consumers. You may participate in other SE programs, but for the purpose of today's call, please focus your comments on [NAME OF PROJECT].**

**First, let's discuss the involvement of your companies with [NAME OF PROJECT].**

1. How did your company become involved with [NAME OF PROJECT]?
  - Probe at what point they learned employees were SE consumers.
  - Probe recruitment by employment specialists or other stakeholders.
  - How was contact made and by whom?
  - Did you receive any training on or materials about supported employment or what's known as the Individual Placement and Support [IPS] model?
  - How helpful were these in preparing you to participate in the program?
  - What additional supports have you received? Probe the following:
    - Additional training, information, and/or materials
    - Communication with employment specialist
    - Guidance when needed
    - Help with issue resolution
    - Other

- How satisfied are you with the supports you have received?
2. What factors determined your company's willingness to participate in the project?
- Probe the following:
    - Hiring needs
    - Assurances received (employer should define these)
    - Company mission
    - Stakeholder buy in and/or belief in program goals
    - Incentives/tax credits
    - Other benefits
    - Enhanced company image
    - Other
  - How important are these same factors to your company's continued participation?
3. How likely is your company to continue to participate in the project? Why?
- What factors would increase your company's willingness to continue participation?
  - What factors pose barriers to your company's willingness to continue participation?

**Now let's walk through the process of placement for employees you were (or are) aware were SE consumers, as well as your employment experiences.**

4. What are the steps involved?
- Probe candidate identification and consideration
    - Contact or referral from ES
    - Review of candidate information
    - Interviewing process
    - Other assessments (e.g., writing)
    - Accommodations to meet candidate needs during process
    - Timing of client disclosure and involvement from ES during this process
    - Length of process to make hiring decision
  - Probe hiring/employment
    - Feedback provided to SE consumer and ES around hiring decision
    - Ability to meet employment accommodations
    - Continued involvement from ES after hiring
    - Performance assessment/issues
    - Other
5. What kinds of accommodations that you have been asked to provide to support SE program participants?
- Which accommodations were easy to implement? Why?
  - Were there any accommodations that were more difficult or challenging to implement? How did you address these challenges?
  - Would these accommodations now be readily available for program participants?
  - Were there some accommodations you could not implement? Please describe.
  - What happened as a result of the lack of accommodations?
6. From your perspective, how do the needs of SE consumers differ from non-SE employees?
- Probe the following:
    - Work schedule or time off
    - Work location
    - Transportation

- Medical/health (e.g., appointments, treatments)
- Family needs (e.g., child care)
- Legal
- Cultural/linguistic
- Other

7. How would you define the successful placement of an SE consumer within your company?

- Probe the following:
  - Match with client needs and/or preferences
  - Match with employer needs
  - Client and employer satisfaction
  - Whether client discloses
  - Length of client employment
  - Employer willingness and/or ability to provide accommodations, etc.
  - Other
- What factors have facilitated successful placements?
- What factors have posed barriers to successful placements?

**Based on your experiences, we would like to hear your opinions about program sustainability and scalability.**

8. Earlier we discussed the types of supports you have received as SE program employers and your satisfaction with these. In your opinion, what are the most critical aspects of the current program to sustain employer engagement?

- Probe responses to Q.1, other
- What recommendations do you have for engaging employers and/or gaining buy-in?
- What other recommendations do you have for sustaining the program?

9. SAMHSA would like to prioritize scaling up SE programs [NAME OF PROJECT] within funded states. Can you share what might be needed to support large-scale adoption of this program by employers in your State?

- Probe the following:
  - Policy changes
  - Training (mandatory and non-mandatory)
  - Outreach and awareness materials or campaigns
  - Funding
  - Technology
  - Involvement of professional networks
  - Other
- What best practices do you recommend to achieve this?