

# Attachment 6: Pre-Release Participant Focus Group Protocol

Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP)  
Evaluation

Site Visit Protocols

*December 11, 2015*

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## PROTOCOL FOR PRE-RELEASE PARTICIPANT FOCUS GROUP

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*Instructions to interviewers: Bullets below each question represent probes for important details; depending on how well you are doing on time, try to make sure respondents touch on each of these issues. Text in [ ] corresponds to sections of write-up template.*

### Part I. Setup and Consent Activities (15–25 minutes)

1. As participants enter the room, ask them their name and write it next to one of the IDs in your list of MPRIDs, as well as on a name tag. Hand them the consent and information forms that correspond to that ID as well as their name tag and ask them to take a seat.
2. When everyone has sat down, explain that, in order to participate in the focus group today, we need to document their consent to participate in our research study. Read the form, verbatim, out loud, and then ask them to sign the form if they agree to participate.
3. Ask them to then complete the participant information form, and let them know that information in the form will be kept private and separate from their name.
4. If anyone declines to fill out the form, write “DECLINE” at the top of the form and keep it separate from the unused forms. Collect all of the completed forms.
5. Cross out the IDs in your list that were not used.

### Part II. Introduction (5 minutes)

Good afternoon. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and this is my colleague \_\_\_\_\_ and we are from Mathematica Policy Research/Social Policy Research Associates. We are part of an independent research team that is studying the pre-employment services being provided in this facility as part of the [Program Name] program. The study is on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor. Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this conversation. Your participation is very important to the study.

To help us better understand how the program is working, we would like to ask you some questions about your experiences. We are visiting 20 programs similar to yours across the country and holding similar discussions. This discussion will be kept private, and no one outside of the research team will have access to our notes. We will not share any information you provide with staff in the program, or any employers, and our reports will never identify you by name. Instead, we will combine information from this discussion with information from discussion groups in other states. [Placeholder –insert into text once we have received CoC approval: To further protect your privacy, the study team has obtained a Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health, which allows researchers to refuse to hand over identifying information in response to legal demands.]

I hope you will feel free to be open and frank in our discussion. I ask that none of you share what you hear with others outside the group. It will also help us if you speak clearly and one at a time. I will try to be mindful of time, and might have to move the conversation along to make sure we can cover all of the topics. We have about one hour for our discussion. Do you have any questions before we begin?

### Part III. Participant Background (5 minutes) [D1]

1. Let's begin by getting to know a bit about your background. Let's start to my right, and please tell me:
  - your first name,
  - what work experience you have, if any,
  - how long you have been participating in the [Program Name] program,
  - and when you expect to be released.

### Part IV. Enrollment and Intake (15 minutes) [D1, D2]

Let's talk about how you got into the program.

2. How did you find out about the program?
  - Did you hear about the program from a staff member, corrections officer, another inmate, or a flyer?
3. What did you know about the program before you started participating, and what did you expect to get out of it?
  - Did you think the program was optional or mandatory for you?
  - How was it described to you, in terms of its benefits?
  - Are other inmates generally aware of the program, and how do they feel about it?
4. What was the enrollment process like? What kinds of activities did you do during intake?
  - Who did you meet with? Where did you meet?
  - Did you attend an informational group session?
  - Did you take any kind of assessment test? Did staff review the results with you?
  - Did you know the point at which you were officially enrolled?
5. Did you have any concerns about being in the program? If yes, what were they?

### Part V. Quality of Services (15 minutes) [D2-D4, H2]

6. What types of services have you received through the [Program Name] program so far?

*If necessary (few responses), probe about services mentioned by staff as provided through the program. Potential probes:*

- Case management and career counseling
- Career inventories or assessments to help you learn about a suitable career for your background and interests
- Information about the job market, such as high-demand occupations and their requirements

- Resume help
  - Interviewing skills
  - Assistance with looking for job openings
  - Access to resources on job openings or guidance on job search strategies (online or in print)
  - Assistance with getting an ID
  - Registration with an employment database
  - Job readiness or soft skills training
  - Remediation or GED preparation
  - Vocational training
  - Job placement
  - Therapy or supports, such as anger management, adjusting to life outside, etc.
7. How easy is it for you to participate in activities?
- How do you usually get to the program for activities?
  - Have you had any problems attending any classes or meeting with your case manager?
  - Do program activities overlap with any other services offered in the facility?
8. Of all the services you have received, which do you feel have been the most beneficial to you?
9. Did you find the content of workshops and the information the staff gave you to be useful and informative?
10. Did you find the staff knowledgeable and helpful?
- How easy was it to talk to someone about your needs or concerns?
  - Did the staff provide you with enough information to help you take advantage of the program?
11. Have you participated in any other employment-related programs or services while at this facility?
- What types of services?
  - How long did they last?
  - Who provided the services?

Part VI. Transition to the Community (15 minutes) [E1-E3]

12. Do you plan to continue participating in the program after you are released?
- Have program staff explained what services you will be eligible for?
  - Have they told you where the services will be provided?

- Have they connected you with the staff that will work with you after your release? If so, how did they make this connection? If not, do you know when and how they will connect you with those individuals?
  - Do you plan to look for a job right away on your own, or connect with your [Program Name] case manager, or something else?
13. Are you familiar with the job center in your community, or have you received services there before?
- Do you know of other programs in the community that help people find jobs? If so, what are they and what services do they offer?
14. What other types of assistance do you think would be helpful to you after release?
- Housing, transportation, child care, education, mental health or substance abuse treatment

#### Part VII. Overall Impressions (10 minutes) [H2]

In our last few minutes, I just want to get your overall impressions of the program.

15. What parts of the program did you like best or did you find most helpful?
16. What do you think could be improved about the [Program Name] to better serve individuals in your situation?
- Is there anything that the staff could have been more helpful with?
  - Are there other services you wished were provided?
  - Did you hope to learn certain skills that aren't being taught?
17. Would you recommend this program to others?

**[If time remains, ask:]** Is there anything else about the program or your experience you would like to share that didn't come up already in the discussion?

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and ideas with us today. This discussion has been very helpful in learning more about the [Program Name] program and participant experiences. We appreciate your time.