Attachment 5: Partner Staff Focus Group Protocol

Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP) Evaluation

Site Visit Protocols

December 11, 2015

This page has been left blank for double-sided copying.

PROTOCOL FOR PARTNER STAFF FOCUS GROUPS

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 Activities (15 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.

2. Provide them with a blank staff information form that has the same MPRID at the top. Ask them to complete the staff information form, and tell them that information in the form will be kept private and separate from their name.

3. If anyone declines to fill out the form, write "DECLINE" at the top of the form and keep it separate from the unused forms.

4. When they hand back their completed form, let them know the discussion will be starting in a few minutes.

    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 your county through the local jail as well as the American Job Centers (AJC) as part of the [Program Name] program. The study is on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). 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 working as partners to the AJCs delivering the program. Your responses will be kept private and used only for research purposes. Our team will use your responses in conjunction with other sources of information to identify themes to describe the overall experience of implementing the program. The audio recording of the discussion is just to help us remember what you say in your own words, and will not be shared with anyone outside of our research team. [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.] We want to reiterate that being part of this discussion is up to you, and you may choose not to answer a question if you wish. I also ask that you not share what you hear today with anyone outside of the group.

I am going to moderate the discussion. It is really important for everyone to speak up so we can have a lively and informative discussion. It will also be helpful if you speak one at a time, so

everyone has a chance to talk. I will try to be mindful of the time and may need to keep the discussion moving to make sure we cover all the topics.

We have about one hour for our discussion. Do you have any questions before we begin recording?

Ok, we're going to turn on the audio recorder now.

Part III. Participant Background (5 minutes) [B1]

1. First, I'd like to ask each of you to introduce yourselves. Let's start to my right, and please tell me:

   - your name and organization,
   - how long you have been in your current position,
   - your role in the [Program Name]\LEAP program, and
   - how long have you been involved with [LEAP Program Name].

Part IV. Partner Experience (10 minutes) [B1, B3, B4, C]

Let's talk about your organization's background in this area.

2. Do you have prior experience working with this population? If yes, in what capacity, and for how long?

3. Do you have prior experience working with the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) or with the jail facilities that are providing pre-release services? If yes, in what capacity?

4. Do you or your staff provide direct services to [Program Name] participants?

   - If yes,

     - What services do you provide, and do you provide them in the jail or in the community?

     - How long do you typically serve them for?

     - Are there other funding sources that you are using to provide services to program participants, other than the grant from DOL?

     - Do you plan to continue providing these services after the grant ends? If yes, with what funding source?

   - If no, can you describe what your involvement is in the program?

Part V. Partner Roles (10 minutes) [B1, B2]

Let's talk about your relationship with the WIB and AJCs leading the [Program Name] program, and your role in implementing the program.

5. Do you have a contract, subgrant, or memorandum of understanding for the work you do in the program?

    - Do you have performance measures associated with your participation in the program? If so, what are they and how often are they measured?

6. When did your organization first become involved in [Program Name], and who contacted your organization?

7. Were you involved in the planning process for the implementation of the grant?

    - What role did you have in that process?

    - Did you have any concerns during the planning? If yes, were they addressed?

8. Are you involved in ongoing discussions about changes in the program design or policies?

    - Who do you meet with and how often?

    - Do you feel like your ideas for the program or concerns are recognized?

9. How has your involvement in the program changed how your organization operates?

    - Have you had to develop new policies and procedures for your staff?

    - Has the program replaced services that you used to provide, or expanded the range of services your staff provide?

Part VI. Staffing and Training (5 minutes) [A1]

I'd like to talk about staff and supervision.

10. Have you added new staff to your organization because of the program?

    - If so, how many? What types?

11. What types of training and support do your staff receive, particularly staff who work directly with [Program Name] participants?

    - Who provides the training?

    - What types of support or guidance do supervisors provide to frontline staff regarding the program?

Part VII. Program Services (10 minutes) [D, E]

For those of you who provide direct services to participants, I'd like to hear your perspectives on providing services.

12. How many [Program Name] participants has your organization served to date?

13. When do participants typically come to your staff for services? At what point in the program?

    • How do you know that a referral is a [Program Name] participant?

14. How do you communicate with [Program Name] staff about the program or specific participants?

    • Do you have regular meetings? How often? What do you usually discuss in those meetings? Are these meetings in-person, by telephone, or through email?

    • How are changes in policies or processes usually communicated to you and your staff?

    • What other forms of communication are used to coordinate services or referrals?

15. Have you faced any challenges getting [Program Name] participants to access your services?

    • Do you reach out to participants on your own?

    • Have you made any changes to how you provide services since the program began?

Part VIII. Data Collection (5 minutes) [F]

[also for partners that provide direct services]

16. What information are your staff responsible for providing to the program about participants?

    • Do you enter service receipt in a data tracking system?

17. Do you use any data yourselves to track performance, or to modify service delivery?

    • What types of data?

    • Have any changes been made as a result of data analysis? If so, what types of changes?

Part IX. Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned (10 minutes) [H]

We have a few minutes left, and I'd like to ask all of you to think about the [Program Name] program as a whole, including both the services provided by the jail AJC, the community AJC, and partners.

18. To what extent are you satisfied that the services being delivered by the program are the right "mix" in terms of intensity, the topics covered, and the time allocated?

    • What other services or other types of changes do you think would be useful to participants?

19. What have been the biggest successes in starting up and carrying out the program?

    • Successes in terms of grant partnerships?

    • Successes in terms of working with participants pre-release?

    • Successes in terms of linking participants to services post-release?

- Successes in terms of working with participants post-release?

20. What have been the biggest challenges in starting up and carrying out the program?

    - What was done to address these challenges?

    - Have these challenges been addressed successfully?

21. What other challenges exist that will affect whether program participants are able to achieve positive employment and recidivism outcomes?

    - For example, a lack of housing, treatment, or other services in the community.

22. What do you think could be improved about the program to better serve the justice-involved population?

    23. What lessons have you learned about serving this population that you think would be helpful for other jurisdictions that might want to implement a similar program?

[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 staff experiences. We appreciate your time.