

ATTACHMENT 9:
STUDENT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

NITT – Project AWARE: Student Focus Group Parent Permission Form

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your school is taking part in an important Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) sponsored study to evaluate **Now Is The Time - Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education)**. This evaluation is being conducted by RTI International, an independent nonprofit research institute in North Carolina. We have selected approximately 100 schools from across the country to participate in this study.

This consent form asks your permission for your child to participate in the Student Focus Group. This focus group will help provide a better understanding of students' perceptions of school safety, school climate, and knowledge of mental health programs and resources in schools. This is not an evaluation of your child or your child's school. The focus group will be completed with your child in school and will take no more than one class period.

Any information collected about your child will be treated confidentially. Focus group forms will be labeled with an identification code, and students' names will not appear on the completed focus group form. The information we collect about your child will be used only by the research team for the study and will not be used for any other purpose. Parents/guardians, school personnel, family members, and other students will not have access to this information. Your child's name will not be used in any reports about the program. We will audio record the interviews, but this will be strictly for note-taking purposes only. All audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study.

There is no compensation for your child's participation in the focus group. It is unlikely that this focus group will have any negative consequences for your child. However, students will get information about school staff they can talk to if they would like to discuss their feelings and experiences.

Participation is voluntary. No action will be taken against the school, you, or your child, if your child does not participate in the study. Students will be told that the focus group is voluntary and that they can choose to skip any questions.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please call Dr. Suyapa Silvia (Task Leader at RTI) at toll-free, 1-800-334-8571 ext. 25851. If you have questions about your child's rights as a study participant, you may call the RTI Office of Research Protection at toll-free, 1-866-214-2034.

Please read the information below and check one box. A parent/guardian must sign and return this consent form **within 3 days** so that your child may participate in the focus group. Thank you. *Please keep the upper half of this letter for your reference.*

[PLEASE PRINT] Child's name: _____ Grade: _____

I have read this form and understand it.

I GIVE PERMISSION for my child to take part in this focus group

I DO NOT GIVE PERMISSION for my child to take part in this focus group

[PLEASE PRINT] Parent/Guardian name: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone number: _____

NITT – Project AWARE: Student Focus Group Parent Follow Up Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Recently you received a permission letter asking your consent for your child to participate in a focus group at your child's school in the coming weeks for the **Now Is The Time – Project AWARE study**. [SCHOOL NAME] is participating in this study conducted by RTI International, an independent nonprofit research institute in North Carolina. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is sponsoring this study. The purpose of the focus group is provide a better understanding of students' perceptions of school safety, school climate, and knowledge of mental health programs and resources in schools.

Enclosed with that letter was a consent form for you to sign to allow your child to participate in the focus group.

- If you have already returned the consent form, thank you very much for your help with this important study.
- If you have not yet returned the consent form, please take a few minutes to complete and return it today. This is an important study, and its success rests in large part on receiving responses from as many students as possible. I hope that you will agree to allow your child to participate. Another copy of the consent form is enclosed for your convenience.

Your child's participation is voluntary, and your decision to participate or not will have no negative consequences for your child.

Thank you again for your help with this study.

Sincerely,

E. Suyapa Silvia, Ph.D.
Task Leader
RTI International

Enclosure

Public Burden Statement: 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 control number for this project is 0930-0xxx. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour and 30 minutes per respondent, per year, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to SAMHSA Reports Clearance Officer, 5600 Fishers Lane, Room 15E57-B, Rockville, Maryland, 20857.

NITT – Project AWARE: Student Focus Group Script/Assent and Protocol

Date/Time: _____

School: _____

Interviewer Initials: _____ Note taker Initials: _____

I. Introduction

Hello. My name is [NAME] from RTI International. Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. We appreciate your interest and willingness to participate in the study. Before we begin, I have some information to read to you that describes your rights as a participant [INSTRUCTIONS TO INTERVIEWER: Give each participant a copy of the student assent form, then read the below]:

RTI is conducting an evaluation of Now Is The Time - Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education). The study is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). As part of this study, we ask that you participate in the Student Focus Group. Your parents have been informed about the focus group and have agreed to allow you to participate. The focus group we complete today will help us gain a better understanding of students' perceptions of school safety, school climate, and knowledge of mental health programs and resources in schools.

We have selected students from approximately 100 schools across the country to participate in the student focus groups. The purpose of this focus group is to gather information about [NAME OF SCHOOL]. This is not an evaluation of you or your school. At the end of this study, we will prepare a report that summarizes the information we collected across participants.

Your participation in the focus group is voluntary, and your grades will not be affected whether or not you complete the focus group. No one will be told if you decide not to answer any questions. All of the answers you give will be kept private and we will not use your names when summarizing today's discussion. We will not tell your parents, teachers, or anyone else at your school about your particular answers. In order to protect the privacy of students participating in today's focus group, please do not talk about what is said in the focus group outside of this room.

The focus group should take approximately 45 minutes. Your responses are extremely important to the success of the study. If answering any of these questions makes you want to talk to someone about your feelings and experiences, you can talk to a school counselor or a trusted teacher. If talking to someone at school is not the best plan for you, you should talk to a grown up you trust, such as a parent or family friend.

We value the information you share with us and want to make sure we capture all of it, as accurately as possible. Thus, I will be taking notes and audio taping this interview. If at any time you would like to tell me something in private, I will be happy to turn off the recorder. When you answer a question, please wait until the other person has finished speaking (don't talk over each other) and please don't just shake your head (the recorder can't see you nod).

Before we start, do you have any questions?

[ASK FOR EXPLANATIONS/EXAMPLES AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW AND ENSURE ALL PROBES ARE ANSWERED]

I. The first section asks about school climate and safety at your school this year.

A. School Climate & School Safety [14-24 items]

1. How well do students and adults get along with each other at your school? Please explain or provide an example.

- Probe: (a) Do teachers and students treat each other with respect? (b) Do teachers treat all students with respect regardless of the student's background? (c) Is there an adult at the school you feel comfortable going to when something is bothering you?

2. In what ways do adults at your school show students that they care?

- Probe: (a) Do your teachers tell you when you've done a good job? (b) Are teachers available to help students one-on-one?

[SKIP Q3 & Q4 IF ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL CLIMATE PROGRAMS IN SECTION II-C]

3. Does your school clearly explain the rules and expectations for behavior? Please explain or provide an example.

- Probe: (a) How does the school let students know the rules and expectations? (b) Do students and teachers work together to decide what the class rules will be?

4. When a student breaks a rule, do adults at your school try to help the student learn from his/her mistake? Please explain or provide an example.

- Probe: (a) Are the consequences fair? (b) Do adults follow through and enforce rules consistently?

5. How well do students get along with each other at your school? Please explain or provide an example.

- Probe: (a) Do students help one another even if they are not in the same group of friends?

6. How safe do you feel when you are at school? Please explain or provide an example.

- Probe: (a) Do you worry about fighting or weapons at your school? (b) Do you worry about any other types of crime or violence at your school? (c) Are there any particular places at school or times of the day you feel unsafe?

[SKIP Q7 IF ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAMS IN SECTION II-D]

7. Is bullying a problem at your school? Please explain or provide an example.

- Probe: (a) Are students teased in a hurtful way, left out, or threatened because they are "different"? (b) Do students spread false rumors about other students? (c) Do students physically bully other students?

8. Overall, how much would you say you like your school?

[FOR SECTION II, ONLY ASK QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO THE SPECIFIC PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED AT THE SCHOOL]

II. The second section asks about programs and resources offered at your school this year.

[IF SCHOOL DOES NOT IMPLEMENT LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM, THEN SKIP TO NEXT SECTION]

A. Life Skills Program (e.g., Second Step) [4 items]

1. Did you learn about the following topics at school this year:

- a. How to understand and control your feelings and behavior? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
 - Probe: e.g., think before you act, control anger, have patience
- b. Ways to resolve conflict respectfully? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
 - Probe: e.g., skills to listen well, handle anger, and make good decisions
- c. How to take responsibility for your actions? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
 - Probe: e.g., admit when you make a mistake, accept responsibility if you get into trouble rather than blaming others
- d. Reasons to not use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
 - Probe: that is, how much do you think people risk harming themselves if they use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs?

[IF SCHOOL DOES NOT IMPLEMENT MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY PROGRAM, THEN SKIP TO NEXT SECTION]

B. Mental Health Literacy Programs [5 items]

1. Did you learn about the following topics at school this year:

- a. Warning signs of suicide and how to get help? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
- b. Causes of mental illness (such as depression, anxiety, or mood disorders)? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
 - Probe: e.g., family history, stress, substance use
- c. Symptoms of mental illness? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
 - Probe: e.g., sadness, loss of interest, stress, restlessness, irritability
- d. Things a person can do to improve their own mental health? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
 - Probe: e.g., physical exercise, balanced diet, getting enough sleep, talking about problems
- e. Things a person can do to help someone who is showing signs of mental illness? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
 - Probe: e.g., offer to help, encourage him/her to get help from an adult at school, talk to an adult at school about it yourself

[IF SCHOOL DOES NOT IMPLEMENT SCHOOL CLIMATE PROGRAM, THEN SKIP TO NEXT SECTION]

C. School Climate Programs (e.g., PBIS) [20 items]

1. Does your school clearly explain the rules and expectations for behavior? Please explain or provide an example.

- a. How does your school let students know the school rules and expectations for behavior?
 - Probe: (a) School motto (what is the school motto)? (b) Classroom rules? (c) Posters in hallways, cafeteria, bathrooms, buses or other common areas? (d) Review student handbook each year with students?
- b. Do students and teachers work together to decide what the class rules will be?

2. When a student breaks a rule, do adults at your school try to help the student learn from his/her mistake? Please explain or provide an example.

3. Does your school use a rewards system to recognize behavior? If yes, please describe.

- Probe: (a) What are the different reward levels? (b) What are some things students can do to earn the highest reward? (c) What happens when a student behaves inappropriately (e.g., are parents involved) (d) Do students get a second chance to behave appropriately? (e) What are some examples of inappropriate behavior?
- c. Do students at your school like the rewards system? Please explain.
 - Probe: (a) Do students take it seriously? (b) Do students feel left out if they don't get a reward? (c) Does the reward system help students understand how they should behave and why it is important to make good choices?
- d. Do teachers use the reward system in a fair and consistent way? Please explain or provide an example.
- e. Do you have any suggestions for ways to improve the reward system? If yes, please explain.

[IF SCHOOL DOES NOT IMPLEMENT SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAM, THEN SKIP TO NEXT SECTION]

D. School Safety Programs (e.g., Olweus Bullying Prevention Program) [10 items]

1. Is bullying a problem at your school? Please explain or provide an example.

- Probe: (a) Are students teased in a hurtful way, left out, or threatened because they are "different"? (b) Do students spread false rumors about other students? (c) Do students physically bully other students?

2. Did you learn about the following topics at school this year:

- f. How to report bullying at school? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
 - Probe: e.g., tell the principal, teacher, or another adult at school
- g. Ways to help students who are being bullied by other students? If yes, what are some examples of what you learned?
 - Probe: e.g., try to stop the bullying, help them feel better, show them how to get help

3. If you told an adult at school that you were being bullied, what would they do?

- Probe: (a) Try to stop the bullying? (b) Talk with you and the student who is being mean or hurtful (together or separately), (c) Give a consequence to the student being mean or hurtful?

[ALL SCHOOLS SHOULD BE ASKED QUESTIONS IN THE FOLLOWING SECTION]

E. School Services/Resources [7 items]

1. What types of support are available for students at your school who might need help with a personal problem?

- Probe: (a) School counselor? (b) Teacher? (c) Health center? (d) School psychologist? (e) Student support group?

2. If you need help with a personal problem, do you feel it would be helpful to rely on the supports available at your school for assistance? Please explain.