

YOUTH FOCUS GROUP FOR YOUTH CHALLENGE AND JOB CHALLENGE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

[Note to site visitor: Use this tool for both the court-involved and non-court-involved youth focus groups.]

Introductory Script

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is [redacted] and I work for Social Policy Research Associates, which is located in Oakland, California. As you may have heard from your cadre or other Youth or Job ChalleNGe staff members, I am visiting as part of an evaluation of the Youth and Job ChalleNGe programs. [Use the name of the Youth or Job ChalleNGe program] here in [state name] is actually one of many similar programs across the country that are funded in part by grants from the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor. This evaluation is being run by the Department of Labor to learn more about how these programs help individuals, such as yourselves, better your lives and find opportunities for education and employment. I have several questions for you today about how you got involved in the program, what you have done since you started, what you've found most helpful, and what could work better. The goal of my visit is to provide feedback to people who can improve programs like this one, so I would appreciate whatever input you have. You may remember that when you first enrolled in the program, you signed a form indicating that you (and your parent/guardian, if you were a minor) gave assent or consent to be part of the study. That consent form notified you about focus groups like this one. It also let you know that you do not have to participate in this conversation if you don't want to and that whatever information I collect will be kept completely private. I may take notes; however, **no one on the study team will share your name or any identifying information in a report** or with anyone outside the study team. I should mention that the one exception is that we do have to report to authorities if you mention you might hurt yourself or another person. I would like to record this conversation for my notes, but before I do, can you each please tell me if this is OK with you (get verbal confirmation)? Do you have any questions before we begin?

First, I'd like to go over some ground rules and let you know how the focus group will work. I'll be asking you a series of questions about your life and experience in the program so far. These questions are meant to generate discussion—you don't have to answer every question, but we want to make sure everyone who wants to, gets a chance to participate. It's OK if you disagree with something someone has said—you may all have had different experiences here—so you can just simply say "I have a different experience than that..." But please make everyone feel comfortable sharing their viewpoint. If we start to veer off topic too much, I may step in and bring us back to the question at hand. Also, keep in mind that what is said in this room should stay here. All right, let's begin.

Visit Information

Grantee: _____ **Date:** _____ **Site Visitor:** _____

Background/Local Context

I'd like to start by learning about you and what life was like for you before you started the Youth ChalleNGe program.

1. Tell me about yourselves. How old are you? Where did you live before starting Youth ChalleNGe? How long ago did you drop out of high school?
2. What was school like for you when you were in it? What did you like and dislike about it?
3. What goals did you have before coming to the program? Did you want to go to college? Where did you think you might work some day?
4. What are you hoping to gain from this program?

Recruitment and Enrollment

Please think about what it was like to get into the Youth ChalleNGe program.

5. How did you find out about Youth ChalleNGe?
6. Were there other people in your life (family, court, etc.) who wanted you to join? If yes, why do you think that is? How did you feel about that?
7. What appealed to you about the program?
8. What was the hardest part of applying for the program?
9. As you know, this program is participating in a study that requires that participants go through a lottery-like process to get into the program.
 - a. When did you first hear that there would be a lottery-like process to get into the program (Recruitment materials? During a presentation?)?
 - b. Did the lottery process influence your decision to apply? If so, how?

Pre-ChalleNGe Phase

Please describe your experiences in the pre-ChalleNGe part of the program—the couple of weeks when you first arrived, and until you became a cadet.

10. How have you adjusted to life in the program?
 - a. To living and working with the other participants?
 - b. To being away from home?
 - c. What has been most challenging about adjusting to the program?

Youth ChalleNGe Residential Phase

I now want to ask you about the activities and help you receive as part of Youth ChalleNGe.

11. Which of the following Youth ChalleNGe activities have helped you most in life?
 - a. Leadership/Followership?
 - b. Physical fitness?
 - c. Life skills?
 - d. Health and hygiene?
 - e. Job skills?
 - f. Education classes?
 - g. Service to the community?
 - h. Responsible citizenship?
12. How is what you do here in ChalleNGe different from what you did before starting the program? Do you think you are learning more or less compared to at your previous school? Why?
13. What do you like/dislike about the program's disciplinary policy? Do you feel like it is more difficult for you than for other youth? If so, explain.
14. Are there staff members you feel you can turn to with questions or personal issues? If so, how do they help?
15. What are the services or assistance the program has provided that have helped you most? Describe how you got help in these areas.

Mentoring

I'd now like to ask you about your involvement with mentoring. (Adjust if participants have not begun working with a mentor)

16. How did you select your mentor?
17. Have you interacted with your mentor so far as part of the program? How did that go?
18. What kind of relationship do you hope to have with your mentor? How do you think your mentor will help you once you are no longer living here?
19. What could work better about the mentoring program?

Job Challenge

I'd now like to ask you about your experiences in the Job Challenge program.

20. Describe the process of going from Youth Challenge into Job Challenge.
 - a. When did you first hear about Job Challenge? What were you told about it? By whom?
 - b. Why did you decide you wanted to be a part of it?
 - c. What extra steps did you have to take to join? Completing your GED or other coursework? Taking a test? An interview?
21. Which parts of the Job Challenge program have been most helpful to you in meeting your goals? Why?
 - a. GED classes? College classes?
 - b. Job training or occupational skills classes?
 - c. Work readiness skills training?
 - d. Leadership and life skills classes?
 - e. Internships or work experience?
22. In what other ways has the program helped prepare you for working?
23. In what ways have Job Challenge staff members helped you in the program?
24. In what ways has the Job Challenge program been different than you expected? In what ways could the program have worked better?

Overall Assessment

25. What are some ways in which the Youth and Job Challenge programs are helping you achieve your life goals?
26. What has been one of your biggest challenges in completing the Youth Challenge program? The Job Challenge program? What did each program do to help you overcome those challenges?
27. What could the Youth Challenge program do better? What about the Job Challenge program?
28. What are the best things about the Youth Challenge program? What about the Job Challenge program?