

Volume I

National Household Education Surveys Program 2019
(NHES:2019) Focus Groups with Parents of Students
using Virtual Education

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Justification

The National Household Education Survey (NHES) is a data collection program of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) aimed at providing descriptive data on the educational activities of the U.S. population, with an emphasis on topics that are appropriate for household surveys rather than institutional surveys. Such topics have covered a wide range of issues, including early childhood care and education, children's readiness for school, parents' perceptions of school safety and discipline, before- and after-school activities of school-age children, participation in adult and career education, parents' involvement in their children's education, school choice, homeschooling, and civic involvement. NHES uses a two-stage design in which sampled households complete a screener questionnaire to enumerate household members and their key characteristics. Within-household sampling from the screener data determines which household member receives which topical survey. NHES typically fields 2 to 3 topical surveys at a time, although the number has varied across its administrations. Surveys are administered in English and in Spanish.

Beginning in 1991, NHES was administered roughly every other year as a landline random-digit-dial (RDD) survey. During a period of declining response rates in all RDD surveys, NCES decided to conduct a series of field tests to determine if a change to self-administered mailed questionnaires would improve response rates. After a 5-year hiatus in data collection for this developmental work, NCES conducted the first full-scale mail-out administration with NHES:2012, which included the Early Childhood Program Participation (ECP) and the Parent and Family Involvement in Education (PFI) surveys. The same two surveys, along with the Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), were fielded in NHES:2016. In 2019, the NHES will field the PFI and ECP surveys along with the second administration of the ATES. This will be a two-stage study. In the first stage, households will be screened to determine if they contain eligible members. If eligible members are in the household, within-household sampling will be performed. Finally, topical surveys will be administered to the selected household members.

The PFI, previously conducted in 1996, 2003, 2007, 2012, and 2016, surveys families of children and youth enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade or homeschooled for these grades, with an age limit of 20 years, and addresses specific ways that families are involved in their children's school; school practices to involve and support families; involvement with children's homework; and involvement in education activities outside of school. Parents of homeschoolers are asked about their reasons for choosing homeschooling and resources they used in homeschooling. Information about child, parent, and household characteristics is also collected. To minimize response burden and potential respondent confusion, both enrolled and homeschool versions of the PFI questionnaire were created for self-administration.

The ECP, previously conducted in 1991, 1995, 2001, 2005, 2012 and 2016, surveys families of children ages 6 or younger who are not yet enrolled in kindergarten and provides estimates of children's participation in care by relatives and non-relatives in private homes and in center-based daycare or preschool programs (including Head Start and Early Head Start). Additional topics addressed in ECP interviews have included family learning activities; out-of-pocket expenses for nonparental care; continuity of care; factors related to parental selection of care; parents' perceptions of care quality; child health and disability; and child, parent, and household characteristics.

The ATES, previously conducted in 2016, surveys adults ages 16 to 65 who are out of high school and provides new measures of adults' educational and occupational credentials. It identifies adults who have educational certificates, including the subject field of the certificate, its perceived labor market value, and its role in preparing for occupational credentialing; and counts adults who have an occupational certification or license, including the number of such credentials, type of work they are for, their perceived labor market value, and the role of education in preparing for these occupational credentials. To get a comprehensive picture of adult education and training, the survey also includes brief sections on adult participation in work experience programs (such as apprenticeships) and college classes.

NHES Focus Groups with Parents of Students Using Virtual Education

While enrollment in traditional, brick-and-mortar public and private schools is the dominant arrangement for formal education in the United States, other schooling arrangements, such as homeschooling and virtual schooling, also contribute to the education of the nation's youth. Further, recent expansion in virtual schooling and the comingling of homeschooling and virtual schooling necessitate a renewed examination of these educational models along a number of dimensions, including: motivations for opting out of brick-and-mortar schools; populations of students served; patterns of teaching, learning, curriculum, and assessments; policy issues; and outcomes for students. Currently, research about homeschooling and virtual schooling faces several challenges. For example, it is difficult to study homeschooling and virtual schooling due to limited administrative data available on these topics and due to the overlap among the schooling options.

This request is to conduct focus groups to inform the development of measures for the NHES:2019 Parent and Family Involvement in Education survey for enrolled and for homeschooled children (PFI-Enrolled and PFI-Homeschooled) related to virtual education. The focus groups will provide information that will assist NCES in developing questionnaire items for NHES:2019 to collect reliable and valid data on homeschooling, virtual schooling, traditional schooling, and the intersection of these educational models.

Design

The focus groups will explore experiences parents have had with virtual schooling. There will be two separate focus groups to explore how homeschooling families and enrolled families participate in virtual schooling. One group will contain families who have a child who is homeschooled and who supplements this homeschooling experience with at least one virtual course. The second group will contain two types of families: (a) families who have at least one child who takes all of his/her schooling online (full-time virtual student) as well as (b) families who have at least one child who is enrolled in a brick-and-mortar public or private school and who supplements that traditional education with at least one virtual course. The protocols for the separate focus groups as well as the supplemental sheets are included in Attachment 3. Both focus groups will be administered in the same fashion. An experienced facilitator, who is also an expert on both homeschooling and virtual schooling will moderate the discussion. The focus groups will be observed by other experienced focus group facilitators as well as NCES project personnel. If time allows, the facilitator may step out to confer with the observers to check whether they have any follow-up questions. The focus group sessions will be audio/video recorded for the purposes of summarizing the results. Any materials that are generated during the focus groups will be captured and incorporated into the summary results as well.

Recruiting and Paying Respondents

To assure that we are able to recruit participants and to thank them for their time and for completing the interview, each focus group attendee will be offered \$50. Participants will be asked to acknowledge receipt of the incentive (See Attachment 1). Participants will be recruited by Sanametrix, using multiple sources, including company databases, social media/Craig's List, and personal and professional contacts. Example of recruitment materials (e-mail and social media) are included in Attachment 1. People who have participated in usability testing, cognitive studies, or focus groups in the past 6 months and employees of the firms conducting the research will be excluded from participating. The questions used to screen respondents for participation are included in Attachment 2. One of the focus groups will take place in the Sanametrix offices in the DC-Metro area. The other focus group will take place in the Philadelphia, PA area.

Assurance of Confidentiality

Participation is voluntary, and participants will read a confidentiality statement and sign a consent form before interviews are conducted. The confidentiality statement and consent form are provided in

Attachment 1. No personally identifiable information will be maintained after the focus group analyses are completed.

The interviews will be audio/video recorded. The recorded files will be secured for the duration of the study – with access limited to key Sanametrix project staff – and will be destroyed after the final report is submitted.

Estimate of Hour Burden

We expect each focus group to last approximately 90 minutes. Recruiting participants will require 10 minutes per potential participant, including administration of the screener questions. We anticipate it will require 3 recruitment calls per eligible participant (thus an estimated 48 calls to yield 16 participants). This will result in 8 hours of burden for the recruitment, and an estimated total of 28 hours of respondent burden for this study.

Table 1. Estimated response burden for NHES 2019 parents of homeschoolers focus groups

Respondents	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses	Burden Hours per Respondent	Total Burden Hours
Recruitment Screening	48	48	0.17	8
Focus Groups	16	16	1.5	24
Total	48	64	-	32

Estimate of Cost Burden

There is no direct cost to respondents.

Project Schedule

The project schedule calls for recruitment to begin as soon as OMB approval is received. The focus groups are expected to be completed within 2 months of OMB approval.

Cost to the Federal Government

The cost to the federal government for this focus group study is approximately \$20,546.